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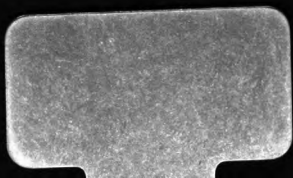
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JACK'S COUSIN KATE.

A *Nobel*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

E. C. KENYON.

"I make a picture in the brain."

IN MEMORIAM.

VOL III.

London :

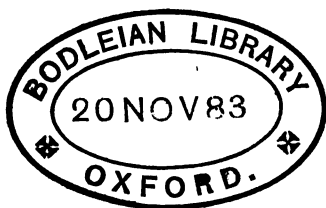
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JACK'S COUSIN KATE.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE RAIN.

Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

LONGFELLOW.

AFTER Dr. Daker and Mary had gone, there was a sudden change in the weather, and a thoroughly wet season commenced. The Harvest Thanksgiving Services—always great events in that part of the country, as, indeed, they should be everywhere—both in the little iron church and in the large parish church of Melynbrehedyn, were held on soaking wet days. But, since the crops were safely gathered in, perhaps that only made the hearts of the people more full of thankfulness. Anyway, they gave freely of their

substance, as Welsh men and women can give, in the form of thank-offerings, and they filled the churches on the eventful days, and listened to the most celebrated preachers who could be induced to come and give special sermons for the occasion; after which they settled down again contentedly for the winter.

At Taliesin Hall it was unusually dull. The whole family missed their pleasant visitors. Fannie grew pensive, and moped about the house, caring little for the ordinary occupations in which Kate in vain endeavoured to interest her. James was graver than usual, but perhaps that was owing to his engagement, which caused him to be so often away from home, that when there he was always very busy, hurrying through work which before had occupied almost all his time. Frank seldom came near the Hall at all, his mother rejoiced that he was now evidently applying himself to business, and that he had "got over" his fancy for Kate. She wished Hugh would be equally disenchanted, or else that he might be successful

in his suit. The little man was a burden to all his friends and relatives just then. So weary were they of his numerous confidences and so desirous that his fate should be settled one way or the other, that they were continually arranging for Kate and him to converse together. This, however, Kate herself did not desire, and she generally managed to defeat the intention. She wanted Hugh to see that it would be useless for him to ask her, and she wished to spare them both the awkwardness of a verbal explanation, which would tend to make her position at Taliesin Hall undesirable, if not untenable. But he was deaf and blind to all her hints, though, indeed, he lost a measure of his self-confidence, and gained a little timidity in approaching the subject.

One day, after Kate had been imprisoned in the house some time, partly on account of the weather and partly because she and Fannie had both taken severe colds while engaged in decorating for the Harvest Festivals, she felt an intense longing for fresh air and exercise. Accordingly, when

the rain ceased early in the afternoon, and a few rays of sunshine stole across the wet hills and valley, and when, in addition, a fine rainbow appeared, she could stay indoors no longer. Hastily donning an old hat and a substantial ulster, she set off for a walk along the town road, choosing that way for the simple reason that there was no other that was not almost in a state of liquefaction on account of the extreme wet, and going alone because her sense of duty forbade her asking any of the younger ones to accompany her on such a day. Walking briskly, she had soon reached the little church, where she paused a moment, thinking she had ventured far enough. The clouds certainly looked ominous, the rainbow and sunshine had disappeared. Glancing back, however, she saw, to her annoyance, that a small, well-known figure was hurrying along the road from the Hall, which she had just traversed. Hoping Hugh had not seen her, and that he might be only coming to the church school to inspect the progress of the scholars, as he frequently did on wet afternoons, Kate hurried on round the bend in the road, where she was at least

hidden from his sight. She did not like to go further, for the heavy clouds were growing blacker and blacker overhead, but she stood leaning against a stile in the hedge by the side of the road, and gazing down over it into the Leifi, flowing along noisily below. For the Leifi was very much swollen with the rain, and Kate could see it was almost struggling with the little bridge, across which the good people from Ty-Gwyn were wont to come to school and church, as if it would wrest it from its position and bear it triumphantly away.

She was glad to hear the dreaded footsteps did not follow her, and while waiting a little, until Hugh had had time to enter the school, she amused herself with gathering a few bright scarlet hips, all shining with wet as they were, off the wild rose briars in the hedge. When she had got as many as she wanted, she stood by the stile looking at the water again, and thinking how restless it seemed, and the suggestive words—

Time like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons along,

rose quite naturally to her mind.

Then the great drops began to fall, and Kate turned quickly to go home. Before she had reached the larches the rain was pouring down so furiously, that she was obliged to run to them for shelter.

"Come into the church," said Hugh, who was standing under the trees. "There is no school to-day, as the children are having a holiday, but if the door is locked, the porch will at least be better than this."

So he had not even been to see, but had calmly waited there for her. Well, of course Kate could not run away now, she must try to make the best of the circumstances.

They found they could not enter the church, as the door was locked, but by standing under the porch close to it they were able to avoid the pouring rain.

"Now," said Kate, with all the animation she could summon, "you must, please, tell me one of those curious Welsh legends you were talking about the other day. This is a capital opportunity."

Did a man ever relate legends under such circumstances? Hugh felt inclined to rebel.

Yet this was the first request Kate had ever made to him, and he did not like to refuse it. Besides, it was undeniably a splendid opportunity for relating some of the tales of his native land, of which he had often boasted in her hearing. He therefore fell into Kate's hastily-planned stratagem with unsuspecting readiness, trusting that he should not quite forget the carefully-prepared speech which he desired to make afterwards.

His companion, meantime, looked anxiously through the driving rain in the hope that someone else might also come there in search of shelter.

"I am sure I do not know which to tell you first, Miss Montague," said Hugh with feverish anxiety, "there are so many. There is one about the Plant de Bat, the children of Bat or Bartholomew—there were two boys and a girl. Perhaps I had better tell you that first."

"Please do," said Kate.

"When the boys were quite small," began Hugh eagerly, "they found a cave, near the Devil's Bridge, with only one entrance-hole

at the top, and they agreed that when they were older they would live in it and be thieves. And when they were older they carried out this intention. You know where there is a will there is a way, and I think so too, Miss Montague," said Hugh, interrupting himself with this very common-place reflection, "so they lay hidden there all day, and went out at night to rob, until there was great talk about the robberies all over the country. But no one found out the robbers' hiding-place, only their sister knew it, and she would bring them food and live with them for weeks, and even go out with them to rob, for she was quite as wicked as her brothers. Well, Miss Montague, they did it once too often, for one night they robbed and murdered a great man, and left his mutilated corpse near the Devil's Bridge, which caused their destruction. For the friends of the murdered man sought for his murderers with dogs, and found them in the cave, with heaps of stolen property. And they gave the stolen goods to the Church, and they hanged the boys and burned the girl."

"What a terrible story," said Kate, shuddering. "But was it true, Mr. Hugh?"

Hugh looked almost indignant.

"I believe so," he said, "and it seems like it when the Robbers' Cave, or rather what remains of it, is still to be seen. "Oh! Miss Montague," he added eagerly, "I must take you there some day. It is a place you ought to see is the Devil's Bridge. I can scarcely believe you have not been there yet. But you shall go—I want you to learn to love my country as much as I do myself."

"I scarcely see why I should," said Kate hurriedly, adding before he could reply, "But please tell me another story."

"I will tell you one I used to be very fond of when I was a boy, Miss Montague," said Hugh, with almost boyish eagerness. "It's about a robber, too, who was called Tom Schone Catti; he was a celebrated thief, and he used to disguise himself in different ways. One day, after he had stolen a bullock from a farmer, the latter, who was a strong man and well armed, rode up to the door of the house or cottage, where Tom's mother

lived, to seize him. Well, Miss Montague, he saw an aged, miserable-looking beggar, with a staff and wallet, sitting on a bench beside the door, and after ascertaining that Tom Schone Catti lived there, he got this poor tramp to hold his horse while he entered. So the farmer went into the house with a brace of pistols, and Tom, for he it was, in the disguise of a beggar, jumped on the horse and rode to the farmer's house about ten miles away. As he went he changed his disguise, having several articles of dress in his wallet, and when he got there he told the farmer's wife her husband had sent him with his riding whip, as a token, to ask her to send him fifty pounds. The wife saw her husband's horse and whip and gave the money to the rascal." Hugh paused a moment, and then added, "And that was not the most daring thing he did, for, not being a bad looking young man he persuaded a wealthy lady to promise to marry him. Some say she was a widow, but I don't know about that—anyway she refused to marry him afterwards, and barred her doors. Then Tom persuaded

her at length to stretch her hand to him through the window-bars, pretending he wanted to give it a farewell kiss, but, instead of doing so he seized hold of it and threatened to cut it off if she did not keep her promise."

"How dreadful," said Kate. "Did she marry him?"

"Yes, of course. What else could she do?"

"I would rather have lost my hand," said Kate.

"I believe you would; I am sure you would, too," said Hugh, with much admiration in his voice. "Oh! Miss Montague," and he sighed.

"But what became of the robber?" inquired Kate.

"Money can do almost everything," said Hugh. "He obtained a general pardon and commission as justice of the peace, and distinguished himself by fighting with some ability against thieves and others of that stamp."

"On the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief I suppose," said Kate. "But

are all your stories about robbers, Mr. Hugh? Please tell me one of a different kind now."

And she looked anxiously up and down the road, while the rain still poured in torrents and showed not the least sign of ever ceasing.

"Well, I will," said Hugh, noticing with delight that Kate was actually asking him a third time for something.

How often had he longed for such a sign of favour! He racked his head for a tale which would be effective and telling, and which would touch Kate's heart and make her beautiful eyes fill with tears, and then, he thought, he would seize that moment to present the petition which lay so near his heart.

"She cannot surely say 'no,' then," he thought, "and especially if my story is a love-story. Ah! and that is what ladies always like?"

"I have it!" he said aloud. "I was reading a good one the other day. Did you ever hear, Miss Montague, of the two brothers Twich who worked some free-stone

quarries, near the mouth of the Ogmore river, about the time of Edward VI. and Elizabeth?"

No, Kate certainly had not.

"Well, those two brothers both fell in love with the same young woman," said Hugh, lowering his voice and speaking with much feeling, "and one day, when one of them came to see her, he found his brother in her house paying his addresses. Could you think of anything more wretched, Miss Montague?"

"It was most unfortunate," said Kate, looking still more anxiously down the road.

"So the brothers quarrelled and swore that they would never speak to one another again. But they went on working their quarries together, though, whenever they wanted each other's help in lifting or in any other matter of business, they made signs answer the purpose of words. After some time the young woman got to know about this, and then she vowed that she would never admit either of their addresses."

Hugh paused, and Kate, feeling speech

was demanded, inquired absently what happened then. Her eyes had a dreamy, far away expression in them, and she was thinking about another young woman, whose experiences in such matters as the one of which Hugh spoke seemed to be so much more real and pitiful, too, at that moment than this old love story.

However, nothing daunted, Hugh went on—

“The young woman’s vow and the uncomfortable terms in which he lived with his brother made Richard very sad. He left the country and went abroad for twenty or thirty years, working at his trade as a stonecutter or free-stone mason at different parts of the Continent, and he studied architecture and sculpture, and then he came home to find his brother had left the family quarry and that he was married.”

“Had he married the young woman?” asked Kate, with tardy interest.

“Oh, no,” said Hugh, brightening up at having in some measure won her attention. “The young woman kept her vow, and, in

spite of Richard's still wishing to marry her, and trying to persuade her to do so, she lived and died an old maid. Was not it sad?"

"Sad to live and die an old maid? Not necessarily," said Kate; "a woman may have many a worse lot than that."

"But only think," said Hugh very earnestly, "having no one to care for you, I mean her," hastily correcting himself, "no one to live for her and love her, and all that. You would not like it, I mean she would not like it, Miss Montague, to feel herself getting old and feeble, and perhaps with no home of her own, only an encumbrance in other people's houses, always in the way, always grumbling and being discontented."

"But, Mr. Hugh," replied Kate, "she need not be that. It would be her own fault if she grumbled and gave way to discontent. She might, and she certainly should, lead the most sacrificing, self-denying life of anyone, because she would have sufficient leisure to cultivate all the highest and best graces. Poor harassed wives, mothers and mistresses

of large households are, I often think, driven along by circumstances in first one direction and then another until they scarcely seem to have the same control over their own lives as other women. Really when one sees some of the best of them, who would scorn to waste their time in gossip or worldly gaiety, spending their days and an astonishing amount of energy and anxiety over the veriest trifles, and caring for nothing higher than the commonest household duties, which any capable domestic servant might do as well or better, one is inclined to pity them—not that I would say a word against such duties which I should be ashamed not to be able to perform, but when they are made, as married women so frequently make them, virtually the end and aim of their existence, then I think a single life might be far nobler and worthier.”

“It’s all very well for you to talk like that,” said Hugh, quite crossly; “but have you ever seen a happy old maid?”

“Yes, there was one I knew in London, when I was quite a child,” said Kate, smiling, “and on certain days of the week she used to

go out regularly with a little basket, a little dog, and a little servant maid, to visit the poor people in her district, and take them a little tea and a little sugar, and sometimes a little money too, and I often thought when I watched her that I should like to be like that woman—old maid as she was—when I grew older, and make some people a little better and happier, at least, for my existence.”

“But you don’t think so now, Miss Montague; you said that was when you were a child,” said Hugh.

“I am quite sure,” said Kate, in a tone as earnest as his own, “that if I am, as it seems likely I shall be, an old maid, I will try and raise the reputation of the name, and I do not think I shall be a worse woman for being always a spinster.”

“Horrid name!” cried Hugh. “But, Miss Montague, you are not going?”

For Kate had stepped out of the porch with an air of determination.

“Certainly,” she said; “the rain is almost over.”

Hugh followed her reluctantly, and the

rain, which had only abated for a few moments, commenced again with renewed force. Kate could not open her umbrella, upon which Hugh opened it, and then tried to hold it over her—a matter of no little difficulty.

Kate was so tall, and he so exceedingly small, that the arrangement was a singularly unhappy one. Yet Hugh would persist in holding the umbrella, and Kate, knowing how sensitive he was on the subject of his height, or rather want of height, did not like to mortify him by insisting that she would hold it herself. So they walked on, mutually uncomfortable, and with sundry jolts of the umbrella against Kate's hat at all the most exciting parts of the conversation that ensued, which somehow seemed to be typical of the position Kate would occupy if she ever became the wife of the rich little man, who proceeded, in spite of rain and mud and general discomfort, to unfold to her his wishes in matters matrimonial.

“Oh, well, Kate,” he began, startling her not a little, though she was expecting it, by this manner of address, “you know very

well that it's nonsense for you to talk about being the most beautiful old maid in the world. That is a position you will never occupy."

"Indeed."

"Yes; it is not at all likely, when there is someone who has two thousand a year, and heaps of money besides, waiting to give it all to you if—if you will consent to marry him."

Then Kate was indignant.

"Do you think I would marry two thousand a year and any amount of money besides?" she said disdainfully. "You must think I am very mercenary," and she gave a little laugh.

Hugh was alarmed. He felt as if his best weapon had been suddenly foiled and left powerless in his hand.

"But—but," he stammered, "it's someone who cares for you more than ever you can imagine, and who would be always thinking what he could do to please you, and buying you carriages and horses and ball-dresses, and all sorts of luxuries."

"It is too bad," said Kate despairingly. "What have I done that you should think such things could have any power to win me?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon, I am sure; I scarcely know how to ask you."

And Hugh told her the whole story of his attachment to herself in many words, with all the eloquence he could command, and at each point which he desired to emphasise more emphatically the unfortunate umbrella came against Kate's hat, causing the rain to be shaken off it on to her and her companion.

There never was such wooing, and Kate was not wooed by it at all.

Yet she was touched by the consciousness that Hugh's love for her was a real thing—for the time being. It might not last long, but it really had an existence just then, and she knew that her answer would be terribly disappointing.

She stood still, therefore, and turning, looked down sweetly but gravely into his face, and if her eyes were dim it was no shame.

to her noble womanhood that she should be so grieved to pain him.

"Mr. Hugh," she said softly, "I am so very sorry, but I respect you too much not to tell you the whole truth. I thank you for the great honour—the greatest honour which can be conferred by one human being upon another—you have done me, but—"

And then she told him she was quite sure this thing could never be.

She had much difficulty in persuading him that she meant what she said, but her patience never failed, and at last she succeeded—for the time.

"And I know how it is," said Hugh to himself, looking after her as she went into the house, while he stayed in the garden to tie up some Michaelmas daisies which the rain had beaten down. "Frank has won her heart. He has such a winning way with girls, and yet I am sure I thought lately that he was devoted to Mary Daker. Perhaps it was so, and, now I think of it, that will explain everything. I have often wondered why she looked so sad lately. It was Frank

she cared for. Perhaps she thought, as he paid her some attention for my sake, because it was probable that she would so soon be one of the family, that he was in love with her, and if so it must have troubled her very much to find he was so taken with Mary. Well, I will see what my influence can do for her—I don't think there was anything between Mary and Frank after all—and of course he would be only too glad if he could have Kate."

And having tied up the flowers, and given a touch here and there to some other plants, he went into the house, thinking that Kate should be happy whatever he was himself, and immensely consoled by the idea of being the means of magnanimously bestowing on her the boon she would most value.

CHAPTER II.

RAIN ELSEWHERE.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary,
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.

LONGFELLOW.

On the day when the rain descended so ruthlessly upon Kate and Hugh on their way from the iron church, it poured steadily down over the rather flat country in the neighbourhood of Rowston, very much to the chagrin of a certain maiden who wandered disconsolately about Dr. Daker's large, old-fashioned house.

The maiden had a kitten in her arms—a little soft, downy creature of the purest white—and at times she bent her head and apostrophised it in the most touching and endearing terms.

“And you know, Kitsy darling,” she would say, “he was most beautiful and

gentle, and we had such a happy time together, and the very sweetest little talks—not about hard, stupid things which make people's heads ache—he would never have taught his little sister Euclid till he made her cry over the 'asses' bridge'—but all about things looking pretty and pleasant, and about birds and flowers, and nothing ugly or troublesome you know, Kitsy love. And I am sure he would never want his sister to become clever, or noble, or anything else that requires such a lot of trouble; but he would like her to be just what she is, and he would try to make her as happy as the day is long. I wish he were here now."

And then she would stand at a window and gaze out at the pouring rain until the great tears suffused her eyes.

"And, Kitsy darling," she continued, after one of these occasions, fondling the little fluffy ball, and looking almost as helpless and not altogether unlike a kitten herself, "he was always trying to make things happy for others—especially for orphan girls, who had no one to look after them, no one that

is but great big brothers, who are rough and self-absorbed, and go out for whole long rainy days, without ever asking themselves what their poor little sisters are going to do."

"Miss Daker, if I were you," said a stout, comely matron, putting her head in at the door, "I'd set myself to do something useful, you are grown up now, and it is not likely you'll find much pleasure in talking to a cat. And, dear me, miss," she added, coming in and poking the fire, "folks say that you are looking real bad."

"But what can I do, Mrs. Homes?" said Mary Daker listlessly. "There is not anything in the whole world for me to do."

"A young lady can always find occupation in a large house like this."

"The servants do everything that is required. Susan looked quite hurt when I arranged the flowers for the dinner-table the other day."

"I'll speak to Susan," said Mrs. Homes, indignantly; "that is just nice, pretty work for you."

"I beg you will not. Susan arranges them

quite well enough. And who notices them when they are on the table ? ”

“ Your brother,” suggested the house-keeper.

“ Oh ! Tom does not care about flowers—garden ones at least—he prefers stones.”

“ Well, dear me, miss, why don't you do some of your pretty painting ? ”

“ I can't, Mrs. Homes, the colours all seem to run into one another,” said Mary mournfully, turning red and heavy eyes towards the good woman.

“ Now you've been fretting again, Miss Daker ; it isn't right,” she said indignantly. “ You that have such a good home and everything that you want.”

“ Everything ! ” echoed Mary, mournfully.

“ It's a sin and a shame, if you'll excuse my saying so, miss, for you to cry your good eye-sight away for nothing at all.”

“ But when I paint,” said Mary, tremulously, seeking to turn Mrs. Homes's attention from her tell-tale eyes, “ what is the good of it all, there is no one that I care for to see my paintings when they are finished ? ”

"No one, Miss Daker," said Mrs. Homes, reproachfully, "when there's master?"

"Oh, of course, but I don't count him, he tries to appear interested, though I believe he thinks his photographs are superior," said Mary, with the very slightest accent of contempt expressed in her gentle voice.

"Well, it's true enough he can do many of them in the time it takes you to do one. But, for my part, I like a bit of colour."

Mary did not reply to this, she wanted to be left alone.

"Now come, Miss Daker, go to the piano and play something," said the housekeeper coaxingly.

"I cannot, Mrs. Homes, it makes me feel worse."

"Try."

Mary went reluctantly, and she played Chopin's Funeral March with such expression that worthy Mrs. Homes left the room with the tears in her eyes.

Youth is sanguine. To Mary's inexperience Frank had appeared so exceedingly attached to her during her long visit at his home, that, daily, since she returned, she had

been expecting him to come, like the golden-haired prince of the fairy tale, to rescue her from the uncongenial surroundings in which fate had decreed that she must live. And hope deferred is not a lively and entertaining experience. Poor little Mary, with her crude, childish notions and no one in whom she could confide, had blundered extensively in her estimate of Frank's attentions. Certainly he had said and looked many things which she had interpreted only too gladly in the way she liked best. For she was completely, helplessly fascinated by the handsome, courteous man of the world, and was already comparing herself to Mariana in "The Moated Grange," and many another heroine of romance, who thought because "he" did not come, she was justified in the wrong and foolish wish that she were dead.

Twilight had commenced when Dr. Daker drove up to the door in a light dog-cart, and giving the reins to his groom entered the house.

"Mary," he called, but as no sister appeared, he did not go in search of her, but took off his wet coat and went at once to his dressing-room.

"If you please, sir," said Mrs. Homes, meeting him, "may I have a word with you before you go in to dinner?"

"Certainly, as many as you like."

"Thank you, sir." And the housekeeper went away looking rather nervous.

Presently she was sent for, and very soon she had astonished Dr. Daker considerably by describing to him how unhappy his sister evidently was, and how ill she was looking.

"I don't know what can be the reason; I only hope you are mistaken, Mrs. Homes," he said in much perplexity. "I don't understand girls, but I have done all I can think of to please her. However, I will consider the case, and you had better not say anything to her—you did quite right, though, to tell me. Poor little Mary," he added to himself when the housekeeper had gone, "I daresay she is lonely, and she has no mother nor sister, and I am very often from home. I always knew she would be dull with me." And he went downstairs with a very tender expression in his dark eyes.

"Good-morning and good-evening at the

same time, Mary," he said, entering the drawing-room, where his sister was waiting for him.

As he took her in to dinner, an unwonted attention on his part, he noticed with much relief that she was looking better than he had expected from the housekeeper's account.

She had attired herself in a pretty cream-coloured dress, upon which she had arranged some real wild ivy and bright scarlet hips with great taste. It had occurred to her that perhaps the one thing she could do was to try and make her brother's home brighter and more pleasant for him, an idea occasioned partly by her remorseful thoughts at having spoken so slightly of him to Mrs. Homes that afternoon.

"Why were you not down to breakfast, Mary?" asked her brother as they were dining.

"Oh! because—because—Tom, I was tired and, and I don't like getting up in the morning."

"But I did not see you before I went out."

"I did not think you would mind, you are always so busy."

"I did mind very much," said Dr. Daker looking injured.

Then Mary brought her plate round the table in the prettiest way, and insisted upon sitting by his side.

"So that you may have enough of me to-night, Tom," she said playfully.

"And may allow you to have your own way about the morning, I suppose, you little lazy thing," he said, pretending to be angry.

"But, oh, Tom! you don't know how worthless I should be all day if you hurried me down in the morning," pleaded Mary.

"What *are* you *worth* now, child? Have you done the Euclid?"

"No, Tom dear, I don't like working—I, I don't see the good of tiring myself—I should never be clever if I tried all my life, so I think it is better not to take any trouble about it."

Dr. Daker laughed, but he shook his head.

"That won't do, Mary, that won't do at all," he said.

"I never knew anyone who was like me," continued Mary, gravely investigating her

own character, "but Fannie Hughes, and, and perhaps one or two others."

"Miss Montague for instance?" said Dr. Daker interrogatively.

"Oh, no, where were your eyes when we were at Taliesin Hall? Did you not find out that Kate was the life and soul of all the domestic machinery? Fannie used to compare her to a large wheel which set all the little ones off working. Mr. Frank said it was painful to his feelings to see such a continual display of energy, he admired a little more repose, especially in a woman; though of course," said Mary, loyal to her friendship, "Kate was never obtrusively busy, and she did everything so quietly, that dull people, like you, Tom," with an arch smile, "never found her out."

"Miss Montague seems to be a favourite of yours."

"I love her dearly," said Mary simply. "And she is so clever, Tom, I should think she knows almost—almost as much as you—about some things at least."

"This is news!" exclaimed Dr. Daker re-

flecting for the first time that he had never, with one exception, taken the trouble to talk rationally with Kate, and find out what she did know, before he had given her the position she occupied in his estimation. The exception was the solitary conversation he had with her upon the hill, when he had so hastily concluded she had read Dante without any appreciation of its contents.

"Mr. Frank said Kate was rather too much of a 'blue-stocking,' though he did not like ladies to be too clever," continued Mary.

"I don't admire that young man's sentiments," said Dr. Daker in a tone of disgust.

Mary felt hurt, and soon left the dinner-table. Her brother, unconscious of having said anything she did not like, followed her to the drawing-room in a few minutes.

"If you will play to me, Mary," he said very gently, "I will not go to my study as usual. I am rather tired, and I should like to rest."

"Where have you been all day?" asked Mary, as she seated herself at the grand

piano, while her brother turned with a sigh of relief to the luxurious couch.

"I have been driving to Crampton."

"That is a long way, is it not? Why did you go there?"

"It is about twelve miles. I went to see a fine Trilobite, which has been found in the neighbourhood, by the clergyman, who seems a very nice man; I hope we shall be good friends."

"I don't see the desirability of your having more friends, Tom. You scarcely ever write to those you have."

"Friendship does not consist in writing letters, among men at least, though perhaps it may in the case of girls, who have nothing else to do. But, by-the-bye, I heard from my friend Stevens last week, and answered his letter too. His wife wanted you to go and stay with her, that she might make your acquaintance, but of course I declined."

"Without telling me! Very cool!" exclaimed Mary. "What is Mrs. Stevens like?"

"A pretty little woman—just one of your

sort, Mary, in respect of not liking to master difficulties."

"Then why did you refuse her invitation without consulting me?"

"Because, my dear, she is too much like you to do you any good, I don't want you to become a 'butterfly.'"

"Much obliged," said Mary half rebelliously; however, she had forgotten about the whole matter in a few moments, as she played some of Mendelsohn's inimitable "Songs Without Words," with marvellous expression.

Dr. Daker, in the very acme of enjoyment, seemed to float away on the sweet strains of music "that gentlier on the spirit lies, than tir'd eye-lids upon tir'd eyes," to the very land of the Lotos-eaters, where he found himself before long wandering happily with Kate. Yes, it had come to that at last. For the time, he had laid aside all doubts and surrendered his mind to the luxury of imagining she was all he wished. Under the influence of the music, it was easy to fancy many pleasant things about her—and not about her

alone; he, the strong man, who had followed wandering lights of science, philosophy and, lastly but not leastly, hard toil in the way of practical benevolence for the masses, he who had always seemed to be struggling up hill, after the almost unattainable, thought he saw afar off, dimly, but still as a fact, an exceeding blessing in store for him.

He was very happy. Mary's music was most enchanting. Pity that she was not by any means enchanted thereby herself! The little fingers, producing such sweet sounds, were trembling nervously over the notes, the pretty face bending over the piano, was quivering with trouble, the graceful figure was drooping as if bowed down with grief.

Suddenly Dr. Daker, who had turned his eyes dreamily towards her, was inexpressibly shocked and discomforted to find that she was stealthily putting her handkerchief to her eyes with one hand as she played.

"Mary darling, what is it?" he cried, rising and laying his hand caressingly on her shoulder.

"Oh, nothing very much, Tom," she replied, breaking down altogether.

"But, my dear," he said, in great trouble, bringing her to the fire and placing her in a low easy chair, "I should think even girls do not cry for nothing," and he implored her to tell him what was the matter.

It was some time before Mary at last faltered that her life was *so dull* and she was *so lonely*.

"I am sure I did not know," he said, helplessly. "I thought you visited with the vicar and his wife, and Dr. Stones and his wife, and our lawyer and his wife."

Mary gave a little laugh, notwithstanding her tears.

"But they're all so *dreadfully old*, Tom," she said. "I never can think what to say to them, and I know they think I am such a foolish little thing."

"But they have children."

"In the schoolroom. They are no companions for me."

"Well, I am sure," said her brother, very much perplexed. "I have tried to teach you what will tend to make you wiser, and I have advised you to go through a course of history and"—

"Oh! do stop, Tom, you make my head ache," said Mary plaintively. "It is not lessons I want, but friends. It's dreadful, Tom, now you don't want me to correspond with the Grahams much, and not to have them visit me at all, and now I have lost the Hughes, and shall most likely never see them again," and she gave a pathetic little sob. "I seem to have been all my life making friends only to lose them."

"Stop, stop," cried her brother, "who said you were going to lose the Hughes? If you like you may ask Fannie to visit you—though I don't think she will do you much good."

"I don't want to be done good to," sighed Mary; "and thank you very much, Tom, but I am sure Mrs. Hughes would not let her come alone."

"Well, could not she bring Miss Montague as her companion?"

"No, it would not do," said Mary, with a little air of worldly wisdom.

Then she suggested timidly that Fannie and one of her brothers might perhaps come.

"But I don't care for the brothers," objected Dr. Daker. "Frank is all very well

in his way, but he is not my sort of man at all, and James is so ignorant and rough."

Mary looked miserable again, and the ready tears rose to her eyes.

"I will tell you what we will do," said Dr. Daker, contemplating her, "we will accept Mrs. Hughes' pressing invitation to go there again for Christmas."

"Why, Tom, I did not even know she had asked you."

"But she did many times."

"It was unkind of you not to tell me."

"I did not want to raise your hopes only to disappoint them, and I did not intend to go."

"But you will now, please, Tom," implored Mary.

"Yes, I will now, if you will try and be happier, and, and learn the Euclid."

"Oh, you dear brother, I will learn anything under the sun, that is if I can."

"A very wise 'if.'"

"You *are* good, Tom," continued Mary rapturously. "I will knit you some warm mittens and a comforter, and I will work you some slippers."

Dr. Daker felt rather uneasy under such

prospective blessings ; besides, he was conscious that he was really pleasing himself.

“ Oh ! I don't think it will be altogether disagreeable,” he said carelessly. “ Only, Mary,” as a sudden thought occurred to him, “ I daresay girls see no harm in it, but you must not flirt so dreadfully with Frank Hughes if you go there again. I thought you both went rather too far last time.”

Mary hung her head. It seemed dreadful to her that her brother should think that they had both only been flirting. She rose to retire for the night.

“ Mary,” Dr. Daker called after her, as she was leaving the room, “ I did not mean to blame you, I was merely giving you a little hint, that was all. You are a good child and play most beautifully. And you will try to be down to breakfast in the morning ? ”

“ Yes, I will, Tom, since you care about it. Good-night.”

“ Good-night.” And Dr. Daker went to the room he used as his study, thinking that he had done all he could to secure his little sister's peace of mind.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNUSUAL CLIENT.

He had not strength of will to keep it fast,
Nor warmth of heart to keep it warm, nor life
Of thought to make the echo sound for him
After the song was done. Pity that man!
His music is all flown, and he forgets
The sweetness of it, till at last he thinks
’Twas no great matter. But he was not vile,
Only a thing to pity most in man,
Weak—

JEAN INGLELOW.

It was the great autumn fair at Melynbredyn. The most miscellaneous assortment of people, horses, cattle, and sheep had been pouring into the town from a very early hour in the morning. Great yellow caravans had arrived the day before, and now the various shows contained in them were in process of being arranged to the best advantage. There was a shooting gallery on the common just outside the town, and swinging boats had been fixed up close by. A photographic establishment had been erected in an open space at the end of the main

street, where stood a monument to the memory of a former Duke of Tyrog.

There were cattle entering the town on all sides, or being penned up in different available places, some of them gaunt, hungry-looking creatures, with the most ferocious horns and wild and shaggy aspect, and others sleek, well-fed beasts, looking mildly out of their soft eyes at their unusual surroundings, and happily unconscious of their imminent danger of being killed in process of time for Christmas beef. There were horses, rough, ill-kept farming ones, and sturdy little Welsh ponies, and, here and there, a better bred animal sent from some gentleman's stable and led up and down by a smart groom, who stared as superciliously at the small farmers, with their weather-beaten faces and slim, Celtic figures, as his horse did at the shabby, ungroomed quadrupeds on every side.

In regard to the farmers, there was here, as elsewhere, a vast difference in their physiognomy. Some appeared well-to-do and prosperous, and had an honest, upright coun-

tenance, as if they both feared God and regarded man. Others had a lazy, helpless mien and stolid expression of face. And others, again, had a hungry, grasping aspect, and seemed hardened and turned into old men before their time by the fell vice of avarice. These were men who could not look one straight in the face, but kept their eyes fixed on the ground, or wandering furtively around the person who addressed them, muttering all the while about hard times and the scarcity of money.

It was more pleasant to turn to the simple, yet often comely countenances of the farmers' wives, who believed in their husbands and turned over to their decision all troublesome questions of right and wrong, or who, though acting sometimes on their own responsibility, and failing a little in the way of stealing, cheating, and telling falsehoods for their sake and for the sake of their families, satisfied their somewhat elastic consciences by that plea, and had happy, smiling countenances, indicative of a very comfortable opinion of themselves.

But it was most pleasant to turn to the

less world-worn faces of the young people—the boys, who were often really handsome, and the girls, whose prettiness was frequently verging upon beauty. The latter were mostly dressed in light muslins and the cheapest of cheap silks, to which even a shower of rain would be singularly fatal—and lo! it was raining, and somehow it (almost) always did rain on fair days.

A catastrophe this which one would think would therefore be expected, and not hailed, as it certainly was now, with unmingled surprise and consternation. Fortunately, however, this fair day was only showery, and after a rush into every imaginable place of shelter, and much anxious solicitude on the part of the servant girls and farmers' daughters as to their new feathers and best bonnets, to say nothing of the silks and muslins, the beauties of which were so quickly and cruelly extinguished, they would sally forth again into the street, rearranging their costume and that of the much-bedizened children, and giving many a friendly nod and shake of the hand as they went along.

Cymraeg resounded on every side in every

variety of inflection and intonation, while, here and there, an English dealer would be shouting his language at some old Welshman, as if it were only necessary to hammer so much sound into him in lieu of sense. And mingled with all this was the bleating of terrified mountain sheep, the grunting of pigs, the lowing of cattle, the stamping and whinnying of horses, the noise of the shooting from the common, the screaming of enraptured or frightened children in the swinging boats, and, now and again, the chimes from the fine old parish church at the east end of the town.

About twelve o'clock the noble Earl himself came walking down the street, with his gold-headed cane in his hand and gold eyeglass ready to uplift when the tall son by his side pronounced anything to be "rather good," or "not bad." His bailiff and one or two others followed closely, and stopped when his lordship stopped, and contemplated what he contemplated, and, coming forward, replied to his questions respecting the "rather good" or "not bad" animals.

There was the Rector, too, accompanied by his son and a little group of gentlemen, proceeding slowly from another direction, with his kindly face full of keen interest in the cattle and horses, to say nothing of the human members of his flock, and just shaded by tender concern at the thought of all the lying and cheating there would be before the business of the day was transacted.

They were very busy at the Bank. People who only came to town once or twice a year were certain to turn up there, with anxious inquiries about their "bit of money," and with the vaguest notions about where it was and what it was doing, or rather what was being done to it, while it was out of their sight. There were old men who gave a sigh of relief to see that the Bank itself was still standing, and old women who would not keep their sighing to themselves, but tried the patience of the clerks not a little with their volubility, and the utter nonsense they discoursed about their *ariant* (money).

Opposite the Bank on the other side of the street was Frank Hughes' office, and the

young lawyer's handsome countenance beamed patience and courtesy upon all who came to him for advice. He had a pleasant, cheery word for everyone, and he treated each old crone, who entered with a long complaint against someone or something very difficult to understand, as if she were a lady; and though he bowed her out as speedily as he could, she invariably went away with the best possible opinion of him.

He was the most popular lawyer in the town, among the poorer people, and the passage outside his office was crowded with clients—such as they were—who would not be content with the smooth-faced clerk in vain endeavouring to inveigle some of them into another room to tell him what they wanted. It was Mr. Hughes they came to see. If any one could help them, they thought, it would be he, with his pleasant words and sympathetic countenance.

Frank was fatigued and harassed; it was all more trouble than he would have taken for any money, but it was the price that he paid for his popularity, and he knew his

reputation was at stake among these people. He liked to be, once or twice a year, their hero, their idol, their paragon of a gentleman, and on this particular fair-day he liked it more than ever, because he was feeling dissatisfied with himself and very remorseful.

Gloss it over with excuses as well as he could, and it is indeed strange if anyone cannot find an excuse for ill-conduct, he knew that he had treated Kate anything but well, and he could not bear to think about Mary. Thoughts of the confiding little girl, who believed every word and look he gave her, and who was, as he said to himself, such a tender, fragile creature that one could almost crush her with a word or a touch, were continually harassing him. Her very gentleness and meekness seemed to accuse him to himself and appeal to his manhood to put the wrong as right as possible, by not deserting her now for the next pretty girl who came across his path. And then he thought it would be very nice if he could see more of Mary, and that it would be pleasant

to be with her again. Even when he was listening with that beautiful expression of patience on his perfect features, to the stout, old woman who wished him to understand some knotty point concerning her rent, he was thinking about Mary, and how pleasant it would be to live with one, who hated work and discomfort as much as he did, and who knew how to turn hours of idleness into things of grace and beauty.

The old woman having been bowed out with a few promises, the performance of which it would be as well not to inquire after, and the door closed again, on the plea that he had some papers to arrange before he admitted anyone else, Frank was startled by the inner door into the office from the house being opened abruptly.

Evidently some importunate client had obtained entrance by that door, in the hope of securing an earlier interview !

It was Hugh, or rather it was Hugh's head, peeping in.

"Come in, uncle," said Frank. "What is the matter?"

Hugh followed his somewhat dishevelled head of hair into the room, and closed the door cautiously, opening it again immediately to look that no listener had followed.

Frank raised his eyebrows, and had just lowered them in time to reassume his air of patience, before Hugh hurried up to him, and taking his hand, asked excitedly—

“Frank, are you busy?”

“Rather,” said Frank, shrugging his shoulders and glancing meaningly at the door, from the other side of which issued smothered sounds of impatience and crowding, to say nothing of suffocation.

“Because my business is very particular.”

“Cannot it wait?”

“No, no, it can't indeed, it's of the greatest importance, the greatest importance.”

“Well, what is it, uncle?”

“Frank, have I been rather a good uncle to you?”

“Not *rather*.”

“Will you do me a kindness?”

“Certainly.”

“Will you—” Hugh stopped abruptly,

and, taking out his pocket handkerchief, began mopping his face with it.

"Will I what?" asked Frank encouragingly.

"Will you—" Hugh stopped short again.

"It must be something awfully hard to do," thought Frank disconsolately.

"Will you—" Hugh seemed as if he could not say it. He began twisting his handkerchief into all sorts of knots with trembling hands.

"Of course I will—that is if it is not very disagreeable," said Frank, thinking to help him.

"Disagreeable," cried Hugh indignantly; "you're not the man I thought you, Frank, if you consider it disagreeable!"

"You are speaking in riddles," said Frank. "Remember you have not told me what this thing is yet."

"It's, it's what I would only be too glad to do myself," panted Hugh.

"Well, why don't you do it?"

"I can't, she won't have me!" cried Hugh excitedly.

"She won't have you," Frank repeated, colouring. "Who do you mean, uncle?"

"No, she won't have me," muttered Hugh, unheeding his nephew's question; "she does not care for me; it's you she cares for, Frank, she *loves* you. Oh! Frank," he exclaimed impetuously, "I know you have tried to keep in the background lately for my sake, I know, noble fellow that you are, that you did not wish to come between me and her. But now I have come to tell you not to do so any longer, for she loves you, Frank, and I—I who would die for her—I—for whom she cares no more than—than the newspaper," looking wildly round and seeking one upon the table, "I, Frank, have come to you to tell you, nay to ask you to marry her."

"Who is she and her?" asked his nephew, to gain time, though indeed he knew of whom Hugh was speaking.

"Kate, Miss Montague," replied Hugh impatiently; "will you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Marry her."

"I don't know," said Frank.

"I thought you would be ready to die of joy," exclaimed Hugh. "I know I should."

"What, to have such a proposal flung at you in that way?" said Frank. "Upon my word, I never liked Miss Montague less!"

"Frank!"

"Why, Uncle Hugh, it's enough to take a man's breath away!" said Frank, disconcertedly.

"Well, you are a queer fellow, Frank," said Hugh, "to think twice about such a beautiful girl, and one who is growing pale and sorrowful, too, for love of you."

"Who said so?" asked Frank, more quickly than he usually spoke. "Did she?"

"No, no, I can't say that anyone exactly said so, but I can see. I have eyes. You used to make so much of her, to please me of course. I know you did it for my sake, and then, when you found it would be better for me if you kept more in the background," Hugh went on, with faith in his nephew, which made that young man feel anything but happy, "you seemed to her to change,

but I can tell you she is very miserable now, I am sure she is. All the light seems to have died out of her beautiful eyes and the colour from her face. You should have heard her talk the other day about being an old maid. I am certain she thinks she will never have anyone but you."

"Much obliged, I am sure," muttered Frank.

"She's most matchlessly beautiful," Hugh said extravagantly, pleading what he thought was her cause with unselfish earnestness.

"She's beautiful enough, but look here, uncle, I am not the sort of man to live on 'bread and cheese and kisses.' She's as poor as, as a pauper really, and I'm not much better off, at least I should not be if I were to get married. And then, there is that Miss Daker; mother has set her heart upon my marrying her. You know she has a nice little fortune, and she is such a sweet little creature."

"But she would never be like Kate," said Hugh, adding earnestly, "Look here, Frank, if you will marry Kate, I will allow you a

fourth of my income, and I will leave you that amount in my will."

Frank stared at his uncle in amazement.

"You are very generous," he said slowly, "very generous indeed. I wish I had known that before!"

"You wish you had known that before," repeated Hugh, with an angry flush. "Why what would you have done that you have not?"

Frank saw his mistake.

"I mean, uncle," he said, "if you had said that earlier in the interview I would not have told you about mother's wish respecting Mary Daker; she might not like it being mentioned."

"Oh! there's no harm done," said Hugh, eyeing his nephew, however, rather suspiciously. "I almost knew as much."

"Thank you for the noble offer you have made," said Frank.

"It's for Kate's sake I make it mind," said Hugh.

"Oh, yes, of course I understand that, and, as you say, she's very beautiful, quite

one in a thousand," said Frank meditatively.

"And as for that little Mary Daker," said Hugh, "she's a mere child, a mere child; and if she were a little fond of you she'll grow out of it."

"Oh! of course, a mere child," echoed Frank.

"And the other is—oh! Frank, she is just perfection," said Hugh, almost with a sob.

Frank winced.

It would have suited him better if Kate had been more faulty, at any rate more, he thought, "A creature not too bright nor good for human nature's daily food."

"Ask her at once," persisted Hugh. "I declare if you don't I'll win her yet myself, and keep my money, too," and with that threat he rose to go.

"Stop, uncle," cried Frank. "I will do as you wish. I agree to your most generous proposal."

"That is right, you're a good fellow," said Hugh, wringing his nephew's hand, and then hurrying out of the office, opening the wrong

door by mistake, upon which more than one person, leaning against the other side of it, nearly entered the room unawares, and in a most awkward manner.

Leaving Frank to pick his clients up and arrange them as he liked, Hugh walked off in triumph, feeling that he had acted nobly towards Kate and handsomely towards his nephew; and, in respect of himself, immensely comforted by the consciousness of his own worth.

CHAPTER IV.

BY THE LEIFI.

He prays, "Come over,—I may not follow."
I cry, "Return"—but he cannot come;
We speak, we laugh, but with voices hollow;
Our hands are hanging, our hearts are dumb.

"DIVIDED."

THE next morning Frank, feeling jaded and tired, after the unusual amount of work he had performed the day before, and not having slept well, owing to the perturbed state of his mind, determined that he would give himself a holiday. And this resolution meeting with no opposition from his clerk, who had long been accustomed to perform almost all the office work, he attired himself with even more than his usual care, and set off walking leisurely towards Taliesin Hall.

The little children in the street pointed him out to one another as something to be stared and wondered at; the poor people, too, bowed and curtsied to him, with all due

deference, and a becoming sense of the condescension of anyone so beautiful, and so beautifully clad, in speaking such kindly words as those with which Frank always greeted them.

As he left the town behind and walked on, the mild autumn sunshine rested on him, as if approvingly, lighting up his bright hair and fair face, and making his good figure stand out clearly from the bleak hill-sides.

It was altogether delightful out of doors. The very wind was mild and gentle; and it was just warm enough to be pleasant. There were no troublesome flies—no troublesome anything at all. The cloudless sky was of deep blue; the hills were golden brown with the bracken, gorse, ling and many hued trees of oak and larch. Bright scarlet rowan berries, and hips and haws of deepest crimson lent their glow of colour to the hedges by the wayside. These latter were instinct with life, from the tiny spider weaving its gossamer threads to the fat rabbit, peeping out shyly below to see who was coming to intercept its usual morning

sally in search of food. Rooks, in ones, twos, and threes, kept flying hastily across the road, engaged in some intricate business of their own, which, every now and then, necessitated noisy consultations, in some fallow field or on some tree-tops, where they would assemble in noisy groups of larger or smaller dimensions as the importance of the case might be. Sheep bells tinkled blithely from the hills, and the very barking of the dogs, as Frank approached Pen-y-bont, sounded of a more joyous and less sullen nature than usual.

The tiny waterfalls made by the Leifi as it dashed over the rocks in its progress through the village, rang out a cheery music of their own. And even the most solemn-looking village people managed to smile and speak cheerfully to Frank as he met or passed them.

All nature seemed at its best and happiest.

The young lawyer, always impressible and susceptible to what was passing about him, felt his spirits rising higher and higher.

Why should he not be glad too? What should hinder his taking this thing which his uncle promised him? A few months ago he would have been delighted at the prospect. To marry Kate and accept five hundred a year, what could be more charming? Mary. Pooh! he would not think of Mary; a child his uncle had called her. Well, children grew out of everything; she would perhaps have a good cry and think no more about him. Mary crying; why should the thought unnerve him? Was it because he had dried her tears away that last morning when he had gone to tell her the carriage was waiting to convey her and her brother to the station, and had found her weeping on the tennis ground, where she had just picked up a late rose he had lost from his button-hole the night before?

"I will not think of it," he said to himself, less gently than he ever spoke to anyone else.

But his memory persisted in showing him distinctly how he had taken the flower and sworn to keep it for her sake, because she had

thought it worth going to fetch, and how he had said some beautiful and tender things, in a vague sort of way, about going himself some day to fetch something very much more precious and beautiful than that half-faded rose, from a certain inland town.

"I was but flirting," he muttered, and yet he wished he had not "gone quite so far."

He had reached the stile now, at the turn of the road going down to the iron church, and, glancing over it as he passed, he perceived something by the Leifi below which arrested his attention.

A woman with a fine, tall figure was standing on the little bridge gazing down into the water. The woman's black dress was fashionably made, but she wore no hat, and her hair was so light that, in the distance, with the sun shining upon her, she scarcely seemed to have a head.

Was it that which startled Frank, and made him stop short with a look of almost consternation?

"It might have been arranged on purpose," he murmured.

Kate had wandered along the river's bank all the way from the Hall, half fascinated by the lively, splashing water, and half wondering at her own temerity. There had been hedges in the way, but she had scrambled over them. There had been rough stones, which had cut her slippers terribly. There had been wet ferns and bracken and long grass to struggle through, but, nothing daunted, she had persevered until she had reached the little bridge below the stile. For the voice of the Leifi had called her down from the Hall door, where she had been standing admiring the freshness of the morning, and it called her still as she stood on the little bridge, looking wistfully down the stream and thinking—ah! what was she thinking about? Not Frank certainly, or some secret consciousness would have told her he was approaching softly over the grass, for he had crossed the stile and hastened down the steep little field to the riverside.

“Are you thinking of ‘Divided,’ Miss Montague?” he asked, his rich voice full of the deepest, tenderest expression. He lifted

his hat, and stood bareheaded beside her. The soft breeze played with his hair and twisted it into curls upon his brow.

Kate started. She was obliged to take hold of the single hand-rail across the bridge lest she should fall, but no vestige of colour rose to her pale face.

"Good-morning," she said coldly, not answering his question.

"Good-morning. How beautiful it is here!" he said, gazing down into the sparkling water.

Kate did not reply. She was looking down into it too.

"But do you think the bridge is quite safe?" he said, with tender anxiety perceptible in his voice. "Will you not allow me to assist you off it?"

And he held out his hand.

"Perhaps I should be safer on the land," said Kate, in a voice which sounded hollow and unreal to herself. "But I am not coming your way," she said with a forced laugh, as she stepped on to the opposite bank.

"A tiny bright beck that trickled between,"

said Frank gently. "Miss Montague, do you remember ?

Tinkle, tinkle, sweetly it sung to us,
Light was our talk as of faëry bells;
Faëry wedding bells faintly rung to us
Down in their fortunate parallels."

"Don't," said Kate, almost inaudibly.

Her head was bent over the river as if she were examining one of the many curious rocks and boulders below.

Frank did not hear her, and he went on talking.

"Do you remember," he said very softly, "how we read 'Divided' together, and how beautiful we thought it ?"

"I remember," said Kate in a low voice.

Had *she* ever forgotten ?

"Ah ! I thought you would," said Frank. "You are not one to change. Miss Montague, Kate," he went on earnestly, "after that day we seemed to go on so happily, just like that boy and girl at first, did we not ?" And now he crossed the little bridge and stood beside her, trying to look into her averted face. "Don't you recollect," he said, "our

reading on the lawn, and how we used to meet at garden parties, when there seemed to be no one else there but ourselves, because we were just all the world to one another? And do you not remember how I used to plan to meet you everywhere, and how I followed you all over, and how glad I was to find you in the Duffryn valley, and—”

“Don’t,” said Kate, in a choked voice. “What is the good?”

“I know—I know that since then events have come between us; they have done all they could to separate us. I was afraid that I had lost you,” said Frank, in a voice ringing with emotion.

“*Was afraid! Lost!*” echoed Kate dreamily, scarcely conscious that she spoke.

“But now I have found you here, my darling,” said Frank, taking both her hands in his.

They were cold and limp. Kate did not draw them away; she seemed to have lost all control over them.

“Look up, my darling,” said Frank again.

“What do you want with me?” asked Kate listlessly, still gazing into the river.

"I want you to tell me that you are the same as you were that day we read that sweet poem in the library at home."

"Divided," said Kate, interrupting him with the ominous title.

Her voice was very low and sad. Was she wishing that things had not been so? Was her heart crying out to the Frank he had seemed then, "Return"? If so he could not come, for the simple reason that he was not, and had never been—except in her own imagination.

"Yes, 'Divided,' don't you remember?"

"Of course, we are divided indeed," said Kate proudly, looking at him with flashing eyes.

"No, not divided," cried Frank, longing after this thing which seemed to be receding from his grasp. "What should have divided us? I have just found you again. It has all come right."

And his hands tightened over hers as he stood waiting, apparently with reverence, for her reply.

He was very beautiful. For one moment all the loveliness of the bright day, the gay

sunshine, the gleaming rivulet, and the glorious hills seemed to centre in his speaking countenance. All the gladness of that fair morning combined to appeal to Kate to disregard the troubled thoughts of her own higher nature and believe in this most handsome and plausible sophist. It would be so pleasant, so very pleasant to fancy he was everything she had once thought him, and to shut her eyes to those disagreeable discoveries she had lately made about the shallowness and superficiality of his character. Might she not have been mistaken? She wished she had, but—ah! those buts; what dismal turns they often give to things!—she knew she had not. Yet some women would have acted even against this conviction, the wish being father to the thought, they would have made themselves believe it was their mistake and not his fault, and by accepting his offer they would have accepted a lower position for themselves for all their future lives. But Kate was none of these. Her very momentary hesitation, and the keen way in which she realized the whole

matter, hardened her the more against his pleading, and lent additional firmness to her reply.

“Indeed!” she said scornfully. “You asked me just now if I were the same who had heard you read that poetry in the library. I answer I am not the same, and you, you have changed me from a simple, trustful girl into a grave and earnest woman, who knows the world sufficiently now to be aware that the ‘events’ which you deplore so blandly were simply and solely created by your own weak, changeful fancy.”

She turned proudly and walked away.

Frank stood a moment as if he were bewildered. “But uncle was so sure about it,” he thought. He hurried after her.

“Kate, do not leave me like this,” he said. “You must hear me first. I have always loved you, but I did not think it would be possible for me to ask you to marry me until yesterday. As soon as I was at liberty from my work I came up this morning to ask you. I did indeed, and I will not go away without an answer.”

He spoke the last sentence with dignity almost equal to her own.

"It does not matter so much about me," said Kate, turning her white face, with its indignant eyes, towards him. "I don't care about myself, but I do care about that dear girl whose life you have tried your utmost to sadden in the heyday of its commencement."

"Of whom are you speaking?"

"You know very well. Oh! Mr. Frank, if you do not want me quite to despise you speak to me no more about such things," said Kate, in a trembling but exceedingly earnest voice.

Frank raised his hat, turned round, and walked away.

He had seen Kate's face turned upon him in righteous anger, he had heard her voice ringing with just displeasure, and he was quite convinced that he should not like to have her for his wife.

So he returned to Melynbrehedyn and astonished his mild-faced clerk by applying himself to business—for half-an-hour.

Kate walked on by the side of the Leifi

until she came to some great boulders, lying half in and half out of the river. Sitting down on one of these, she gazed absently at the foaming water playing around the stones below. But she could not see them very plainly for the tears which blinded her eyes. For now, Kate, being in spite of her recent severity a most womanly woman, was indulging in one long last fit of crying over Frank, or rather her ideal Frank, who straightway vanished in that mist of tears and never returned to haunt and trouble her again.

CHAPTER V.

A DARK HOUR.

It is through loss that all gain in this world is made. The winter leaves must fall that the summer leaves may grow.

HUGH MACMILLAN.

Defeat may be victory in disguise,
The lowest ebb is the turn of the tide.

LONGFELLOW.

"It is most provoking, Rice, it is really most provoking!" exclaimed Mrs. Hughes one dull grey afternoon in November, following her husband into his own room, after dinner, which had been early.

"What is the matter now?" he asked in the most innocent and unconscious manner he could assume, though he knew as well as his wife what her trouble was about.

"Are you aware that it is useless of your brother to think any more about Kate? She will have nothing to say to him!" said Mrs. Hughes, in accents of intense disappointment.

"I could have told you that weeks ago," replied her husband coolly, taking up his daily paper and pretending to read, a refuge

he often sought when his wife was telling him of her troubles.

"Of course he told me she had refused him, but really I felt sure that when she came to reconsider the matter and think of all the advantages she would have if she entered our family, she would change her mind, so I advised Hugh to ask her again and again."

"You might have known it would be useless."

"How should I? You change so, Rice," said his wife pettishly. "You said yourself she would make him a beautiful wife, and now you don't seem to care about it!"

"I said she would make him a beautiful wife, *if he could win her*, and to tell you the truth, I never thought he could."

"Then why did you let us adopt her, and be involved in all this entanglement?"

"Because I liked the girl, and I like her now more than ever, and I see no entanglement at all," said Mr. Hughes placidly.

"But I do; I foresee no end of trouble!"

"In what way?"

"This is Hugh's home; is it to be made

wretched for him by the presence of, of this woman?"

"Tut, tut! He'll soon get over it. I am sure I cannot remember how many girls he has been in love with before, four or five at least."

"It is very unkind of you, Rice, to bring up old stories against people!"

"I am not saying a word against him, I would not for the world. But tell me how it is you have just become convinced of what I knew all the time?"

"Kate was speaking to me about it this morning."

"Humph! I thought she looked rather down-hearted at dinner! What did she say?"

"I was going to have said, if you hadn't interrupted me," said his wife, snappishly, "that she begged me to speak to him, and ask him not to trouble her by talking about it again."

"It was queer that she should tell you."

"Oh, she knew I knew about it. In fact I spoke to her about it first. Hugh had asked me to do so."

"Well, what did you say; I don't mean at first, but after she had asked you to tell him that it was no use?"

"I am afraid I spoke very sharply. I was so vexed, after all we have done for her and have undertaken to do, it seemed too bad that she would not have him! It is most annoying, she would have been so nice for him; for after all I really like her."

"You need not have been cross with her."

"But I was, I could not help it." Mrs. Hughes poked the fire irritably. "Rice," she added, "I am nearly certain she cares for Frank."

"For Frank?"

"Yes, have you noticed how he keeps away just now?"

"Why should he keep away? If she likes him that is all the more reason why he should come."

"But he does not care for her in that way, he told me so three weeks or more ago. And Kate has looked very pale and sad lately."

"I am going down to town this afternoon, and I will have a little talk with that young

gentleman," said Mr. Hughes, his face flushing and eyes flashing with anger.

"What do you mean? I really am glad that he does not love her," said Mrs. Hughes, looking rather frightened.

"Why?"

"He is not rich enough to marry a penniless girl—though I have reason to think that if things had been so, Hugh would have been very generous—but I want him to marry Mary Daker, she has such a nice little fortune."

"Frank marry Mary Daker, then why in the world did he make love to Kate?" cried his father wrathfully ringing the bell.

"Now, Rice, don't go and be cross with him," implored his wife. "He is so different to you—you do not understand him."

"I do not understand him indeed!"

The housemaid entered.

"Tell Edwards to saddle my horse immediately," said Mr. Hughes, in very loud and angry tones.

"Yes, sir." And the servant went away looking decidedly injured.

"Rice, remember he is high-spirited," pleaded Frank's mother.

"I only wish he were, instead of stooping so low as to act in that way," growled his father.

So Mr. Hughes rode down to Melynbrehedyn in great displeasure, while Mrs. Hughes alternately angry and terrified, kept out of Kate's way, which was not difficult since she had locked herself up in her own room.

Mrs. Hughes had confessed that she had spoken sharply to Kate, but she had not said she had called her ungrateful, nor owned to having in her anger disclosed to her the reason why she had been so suddenly adopted by herself and husband.

Her words had revealed much that had puzzled Kate, and they had filled her with consternation.

She had gone to her own room directly dinner was over, had locked the door, and now she was pacing up and down it in a stunned, mechanical sort of way, often finding herself absently counting the pattern of the carpet, or the clusters of tiny rose buds in the paper on the wall instead of disentangling her troubled thoughts.

It was bitterly cold, and the afternoon was very dark; two present facts, highly conducive to a melancholy view of her position. Great clouds were lowering without; fitful gusts of wind shook the window-frames at intervals of varying duration.

"I have been so happy here," thought Kate sadly. "I had grown so fond of almost the whole family, the little ones, Hubert, Fannie, even James, who was always kind to me in his rough way, and poor Miss Jones and Mr. Hughes and the people all about, especially Mrs. Dr. Griffiths. And now I must leave this place which I had learnt to look upon as my home, and I must face the world again. I must work, must toil for my daily bread, and I can never hope to regain such a position as this which I have lost. Mrs. Hughes hinted as much, and indeed how can I look for another home like this has been. Yet I must go, I could not possibly stay here to be continually in Hugh's way, and to keep Frank from his own home."

Just then a little robin, apprehensive evidently of the gathering storm, dashed it-

self against the window-pane, in a frantic but vain attempt to force an entrance.

Kate went to open the window, but she could see nothing of it then. "Another houseless, homeless wanderer, such as I shall be soon," she thought bitterly, closing the sash and shivering with the cold she had admitted.

Everything was very dreary outside. The beautiful larches seemed, now they were leafless, to be mere black bunches of sticks. The hills looked bleak and bare, the garden was a scene of desolation. Kate turned away, and then she began to think about Jack and how sorry he would be if she had to leave, for his letters were full of a contemplated tour for the next spring in South Wales, which, by some complicated process of reasoning, was to begin and finish by a "look in," he wrote, "at Taliesin Hall, which lies so conveniently on the borders of that interesting country."

When she thought of Jack she remembered that she no longer occupied the first place in his estimation. She was no longer his

"Princess," to whom he would be only too glad to act as cashier; and though that fact had given her but sorry consolation before, it seemed to add the last straw to her burden of lonely sorrow to think that she had lost even it.

"Kate, dear, may I come in?" asked Miss Jones's thin voice at the door.

"Do you want anything particularly?" asked Kate reluctantly.

"Oh, no, not if you are busy," and the patient little governess went away, sighing, however, as she did so. She suspected Kate was in trouble, and she wished to share her grief, and, if possible, comfort her a little, for she loved her dearly now. "But Kate does not want my sympathy," she thought dismally as she turned away.

Kate felt sorry, too, not to have been able to admit her. But how could she? "We have each to fight our own battle alone," she thought.

She threw herself into the armchair by the empty fire-place. The wind came moaning in a wild gust down the chimney, "Alone,

alone," it seemed to say, and then it whistled through the key-hole and shook the window-frame again, as if to show Kate what a cheerless world it was in which she had been left alone.

She looked round wildly. The room was growing darker and darker. It seemed to her, with her imaginative nature, to be symbolical of her own gloomy prospects.

She had been so worried and harassed, during the last few weeks, that she was not feeling so well and strong as usual, and she seemed to have no physical power to resist the influence of all this dreariness.

As Mrs. Hughes had said to her husband, Hugh had asked her again and again if she would not change her mind, after his nephew had owned to him that he had been refused, and he had haunted her everywhere with his wistful, reproaching gaze. He had not manliness enough to go away. Kate must do that herself. Frank had kept out of her way as much as possible. When they met he was very cold and distant, as much so as a man of his gentle courtesy could be to a woman.

Kate felt that he disliked her now, with the intense dislike which a weaker mind can feel for one that has proved better and stronger than itself. She knew he would be glad if she went away. But where could she go? In the depths of her despondency she felt hopeless of finding another situation that she could undertake.

As she thought sadly of all this, she became colder and colder, while the wind spoke to her with its dismal voice more and more ominously. It told of discomfort and turmoil in the uncongenial world without, but chiefly it seemed to say again that melancholy refrain "Alone, alone, alone."

Kate tried to rally herself. "Mrs. Griffiths would say *not alone*, she would say none of the *Father's* children were ever left alone," she told herself.

But then she shuddered, for she recollected a sermon she had heard preached by a great English mission preacher, who had visited Melynbrebedyn the week before, to a crowded congregation from the words, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he

that believeth not is condemned already.” Kate fancied she could still hear his vehement words about the latter clause of his text. “Yes,” he had cried, “if you do not believe, wherever you go the sword of condemnation is hanging over your head. If you go out into the beautiful sunshine it is there still, among the gay assembly of your friends and acquaintances it is there still, wherever you go, the world is to you one vast condemned cell, and you, whether you are thinking about it or not, are condemned—condemned—condemned.”

And what was this believing? “I do not understand it,” she said to herself; “theologians are of different opinions, how can I tell what it is when I have never studied the matter?”

She felt cold, hard, hopeless. The troublesome circumstances, which had before been so overwhelming, receded into the back-ground before the icy presence of doubt.

Darker and darker grew the room, blacker and blacker the thick darkness of her despondency.

And then the terrible thought assailed her that *God* was afar off in Heaven, in majesty and glory—the idea of which made the darkness round about her the more appalling—that the *Lord Jesus* was sitting at *His* right hand—and that she was alone in her desolation and grief, with her terrible fears and that bewildering conviction that she was condemned.

It was the most fearful experience that Kate had ever had. The thought that *the Godhead* was so far off, so utterly removed from her, and so entirely disregarding of her desolation, filled her with despair. In the darkness the room seemed full of it.

She went to the window and looked out. There was a great hush over everything, the wind had subsided all at once. The black clouds had parted slightly, and were tinged with yellow. She wondered at the sudden stillness, but only for a few moments; for what was that descending swiftly and silently over the land?

It was snow. The tiny flakes were already resting lightly on every object out of doors,

covering all the bleakness and desolation with their fair, pure garment. Soon there would be nothing harsh or forbidding to be seen, all would be changed into that beautiful, clear whiteness.

Kate looked up to the black clouds, out of which such beauty was being evolved, and felt inexpressibly comforted.

The conviction found its way into her mind, with all the force of truth, that darkness could be changed into light, sorrow into joy, and sin give place to holiness—because there was *One* in *whom* all things are possible.

Thus Kate's dark hour passed away, as dark hours, even the darkest and longest, will and do pass away from us all. And in less than five minutes she was actually smiling. For little Rice was running along the corridor outside her door, shouting gleefully, "Snow, snow," and clapping his little hands for joy.

"Kate, come out of your room and see the snow," he cried, hammering away now at her door with his fists. "And, oh! how

I will snow-ball you to-morrow ! And may I see how it looks through your window ?”

What could Kate do but let the happy child come in and join him, too, in singing—

Snow, snow, go away,
And come again another day,

a request which, if it had been granted, would have well-nigh broken his little heart for the evening.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTMAS GUESTS.

O Christmas, merry Christmas !
Is it really come again ?
With its memories and greetings,
With its joy and with its pain.
There's a minor in the carol,
And a shadow in the light,
And a spray of Cypress twining
With the holly wreath to-night.

F. R. HAVERGAL.

It was the day before Christmas Eve. Kate and Fannie had been busily engaged, all through the short hours of daylight, in making wreaths and festoons of glistening evergreens and bright scarlet berries, to be carried in the morning to the little iron church, and arranged and fastened up in the most conspicuous situations. Crosses and crowns of the purest snow-berries, of variegated holly and of holly-berries had been hung about the room as they were finished, there to await the morrow, and Kate glanced at them, with a sigh of relief and satisfaction, when she

rose from her completed task, or rather labour of love. For all these decorations were to gladden the eyes and hearts of every church-goer on the coming Christmas Day, and to help to make the people and the little children realize how they ought in honour to commemorate the advent of the Prince of Peace.

Kate had sent Fannie away an hour or more before, for she was tired and complained that she had pricked her finger sadly. And now, in the early twilight, she lingered yet a little while herself before she left the room, as if loath to quit the scene of her day's work. For many happy thoughts had visited her there, and, while her busy hands were toiling, she had been thinking of all that had taken place during the last few weeks.

She remembered how desolate she had been on that first day of real winter, when Mrs. Hughes and she had tacitly agreed that she would have to leave, and how that trouble and those connected with it had given place to the still greater despair which the coming of the snow had so happily and effectually

helped to dissipate. She had had no return of those gloomy thoughts. Outside the snow had lingered, day after day frequently adding another layer to its smooth, shining surface ; and in her heart she was at peace, trusting, simply trusting, like a little unreasoning child, that all was well. She could have scarcely said how it had come about, but she believed the conviction had been sent her, and she took it gladly, thankfully from the *Father's* hand. Her gratitude was wrought into her daily work, uttered in the tones of her gentle, sympathising voice, and it gave additional sweetness to the expression of her beautiful face.

How kind the Hughes had been ! When Mr. Hughes had returned from Melynbrehedyn that evening, covered with great white flakes and looking graver than usual, he had called Kate to him in the hall, and asked her to come to his room, after tea, that they might have a little talk. And how tender and fatherly he had been ! He had said she must stay with them, and that all these little troubles would soon be smoothed away. And

when she had falteringly disclosed to him something of her grief and consternation at the discovery why it was she had been treated as one of his family, he had reassured her with a plain but emphatic statement of the comfort she had been to them, and the satisfaction they derived from her helpful companionship. "As for me," he concluded, "I adopted you simply and solely because I liked you, and seeing that I like you now, Kate, more than ever, I cannot hear of your leaving us." Then Mrs. Hughes had come in and besought her to stay with them, in a manner so earnest and evidently sincere that she had been both surprised and gratified. She had not known, though she had suspected, that the worthy woman was feeling not a little remorse for her severity that afternoon, and that, now she was sure there was no danger of either of her sons falling in love with Kate, she had no wish for her to leave, for she was really glad to have her help in many ways, and she liked her more than she would own.

So Kate had consented to stay, and everyone seemed kinder to her than ever after that.

Hugh had been persuaded by his brother and sister-in-law to accept an opportune and most pressing invitation to accompany an invalid friend to Ventnor for the winter, or at least the first part of it. He was, as we have seen, very kind and warmhearted as a friend, but it had been a great trial for him to have to go, and he had only consented upon being assured that Kate would be much more likely to stay at Taliesin Hall if he went away for a time.

His leave-taking of them all had been a most pathetic one. He might have been going away for so many years instead of months, it was so mournful. His brown eyes were full of tears when he said "Good-bye." And he looked a very care-worn, very middle-aged little man indeed, as he tried to rally himself to count how much luggage was being stowed away in the dog-cart, which was to convey him to the station. Then, when the children, seeing him so miserable, began to cry, as children will on slight provocation, he had been so touchingly grateful, and had assured them, in broken words, that he would bring them the most wonderful presents when he

returned. "For I should like them to look forward to my coming back," he had said humbly, with the idea surviving still that money was his most potent influence. He had shaken hands hurriedly with Kate, then turned and rushed away from her.

But as he was climbing up into the high dogcart, he seemed to recollect something, and hurried down, drew Kate on one side, and said earnestly—

"I hope you will always regard me as your friend, Miss Montague, and if there is ever anything which I can do for you, I trust you will be so kind as to let me know."

Kate had thanked him and endeavoured to speak some kindly words, but he had hurried away again as if he could not bear to hear them.

Frank did not come to Taliesin Hall oftener than he could help, and he treated Kate with more than usual deference, but that was all. Mrs. Hughes hoped that, when Mary Daker came with her brother to stay with them during Christmas week and as long afterwards as they liked, everything would then come right.

The Dakers were expected that evening. Dr. Daker had sent word that he intended coming on his tricycle, but the snow had defeated his intention, and he and Mary were to arrive at Melynbrehedyn by the six o'clock train.

Even as Kate stood at the schoolroom window for a few moments, she could hear the carriage setting off to meet them. Edward Edwards was entrusted with the duty of convoying them safely, in the rarely used brougham, from the station to the Hall, and his voice sounded very "big" and important, in consequence, as he shouted to the stable-boy to run and open the *llidiart* (gate) at the bottom of the drive.

"Hugh would have gone to the station if he had been at home," thought Kate. "What a general disturber of the peace I have been!" and she sighed. It was no satisfaction to her that she had won more hearts than she desired, rather she felt grieved and humiliated; it upset a theory of hers that it was a woman's own fault if she received more offers than she wanted.

The moon had risen, and it shone down

now on the glistening snow, making the hills around look cold and white, and showing every object with peculiar and almost bewildering distinctness.

Kate thought of Dr. Daker, and wondered if he would want to photograph the hills in their winter aspect, and the Hall with its snowy lawns and snow-laden trees and shrubs. Would he wish her to act as his "yard measure" again? And would he say "thank you," and look as if he appreciated her kindness in always standing just how and where he pleased? Or would he take it all as a matter of course, and apparently care as little whether she was tired or he was imposing on her good nature as before? Good nature! She could not help herself! She could not help obeying him—therefore she hoped he would be merciful. How it was she always felt obliged to submit to his imperious orders she did not know. She had once heard it said that a strong will can always bend another to its purpose—that is, provided of course, that the other will be weaker. But she knew her own will was

not weak, it was stronger than that of most people, and it was in good control, which made it twice as potent.

“Kate, Kate, go and dress for dinner this minute,” cried Fannie entering, in white cashmere, with Christmas roses in her dark hair and at her neck.

“It is not time to dress for dinner yet; the carriage has only just now gone for our guests,” said Kate, rousing herself from her dreaming cogitations.

“Oh! but Kate, I want you to make haste down to me in the drawing-room. It is so comfortable there, and we can practise some carols until they come. And, Kate, I like you to say ‘*our* guests,’ it sounds as if you were one of us.”

“And I feel like one of you, too,” said Kate.

“That’s right. Here are Christmas roses for you,” Fannie went on, handing Kate three fine ones. “And you must hurry, it is so cold upstairs, and so warm in the drawing-room—Hubert and James have been piling up the logs there till really I shall not be surprised if the chimney catches fire.

Poor mother is in such a way, and she dare not have them pulled off for fear of spoiling the bright fire-irons and filling the room with an impromptu and very inconvenient kind of snuff, as somebody calls it."

"How came your brothers in the drawing-room before dinner? They do not usually appear there until they are obliged."

"Oh, James is full of the idea of our all sitting round the fire telling ghost-stories, or something of the sort; hence his unusual thoughtfulness. And, oh, Kate, I'm so glad I thought of it," she added, as Kate was leaving her, "I want you to wear white-to-night. Just to-night."

"To-night, least of all," said Kate.

"But why? Is it not the time of joy?"

"Yes—and because I am so happy, I should not like to seem to forget him with whom I passed last Christmas Day."

Kate went to her room and attired herself in black silk, with the simple adornment of Fannie's Christmas roses below her neck. She wore no flowers in her golden hair; and, indeed, they were not needed.

A little later she joined Fannie in the drawing-room, and they sang carols until the other members of the family had assembled.

Then ensued a tedious waiting time. Seven, eight, nine o'clock struck, but no important servant-man, no welcome guests and not a sound of approaching carriage-wheels were to be seen and heard.

Dinner over, the younger members of the family retired for the night. But their elders still sat round the fire in the drawing-room, gazing at what remained of the festive logs, and saying "How strange!" and "What can be the matter?" at intervals.

Ten o'clock struck and then eleven. Kate felt restless, and, at last, she stole away from the others to look out of the hall-door.

The night was very still. The "pale, cold moon" lighted up the frosty air, and was reflected back again from the snow until it almost seemed as light as day.

Kate took up a white shawl which happened to be in the hall, and, wrapping it about her, went out into the garden.

How crisp the snow was! How impossible to distinguish flower-borders from the walks around them! Were those frozen-looking sticks real living plants? Did that ridge of snow really contain bright green box-edging? Were those shrubs that were drooping under the weight of frozen snow? What would the master of the garden think if he could see it now? Perhaps he was melancholy in the distant south, and longed to see his home again. He might be gazing, from his warmer locality, at that same moon which shone on this snowy scene, and counting the weeks and months which he had been told had better elapse before his return. Kate felt so sorry for him, and for the trouble she had caused him that the tears came into her eyes, and she wandered a little further, that she might recover her composure before re-entering the Hall.

Something stole past her and went swiftly in the direction of the house. Kate started. It was like a dog, but like none of those about the place. She thought it strange, and began to retrace her steps; then she

perceived a man standing on the nearest lawn, as if he were looking about. When she reached him she found it was James.

“Did you see the fox?” he asked.

“I saw something which was most likely it,” she replied; “and it ran in your direction.”

“Yes, it was Sir Reynard,” he said, “sure enough; he has stolen largely from our poultry-yard of late, and I have sometimes found his track upon the snow the last day or two. I wonder where he has gone now. Will you look a little way down the drive, while I go in the direction of the buildings?”

“Certainly.”

There was a spice of adventure about all this which Kate enjoyed. Any way, it was better than sitting tamely in the room, waiting in vain for the expected visitors and conjuring up doleful pictures of all sorts of railway accidents which might have befallen them. She had not thought she had cared for them as she felt she did now there was a chance, at least, of their never meeting upon earth again.

As she walked a little way down the steep drive over the hard snow she found herself thinking of Mary's sweet, gentle disposition, and of how wise and good the Doctor was; she had heard many little things from Hugh and Mary that had deepened the respect in which she had always held him, and which had made his reservedness with her the more chilling and distressing. If he and she were once to understand each other what friends they might become! Kate believed in Platonic friendship, let who would sneer at them and call them failures. Had there not been illustrious men and women who had been as iron sharpening iron, and as most helpful, strengthening aids to one another? Glancing abroad, she thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Doctorin Diede, Stanislaus II. of Poland and Madame Geoffrin, Chateaubriand and Julie Recamier, A. W. von Schlegel and Madame de Staël, and others; and in England there must have been many, though, at that moment, she could only recollect Harriet Martineau and Mr. Atkinson's friendship, and that of the widely different Cowper with his faithful friend, Mrs.

Unwin. Was not the motto true—" *Freundschaft ist die Liebe ohne Flügel?* " " All my life," she said to herself, as a popular French writer has said also in other words, and as, doubtless, numbers have acknowledged to themselves if to no other, " I have been longing for an ideal friendship." And then she asked herself why she should not have one as well as others. She had discovered, or she thought she had, that love was a poor unsatisfactory sort of thing, and she was in need of a true friend, to whom she would not have to look down mentally, nor against whose narrow dogmas she would not find herself continually chafing.

She began to suspect that it was possible, barely possible, that Dr. Daker might prove such an one. She had heard him utter high and noble thoughts. It was terrible to recollect he might even then be lying crushed and lifeless from some fearful railway accident. For if the train had come in, or the next one to it, which was the last that night by which they could arrive, Edward Edwards would certainly have returned ere this time.

Musing thus, she wandered on further than she had intended, until she was startled by a most lamentable cry, as of someone in terrible distress, and then another and another. What could be the matter? The sounds proceeded from the direction of the bridge over the Leifi. Some poor creature must be in great pain or fear. She would go to the rescue. Perhaps her presence coming suddenly might frighten away some robber or— But she did not stay to think any more, for another terrible cry made her run down the drive, with no fear but that of being too late.

Edward Edwards, who was driving slowly over the little bridge by the time she reached it, thought she was a ghost, and stopping, called out to Dr. Daker in great alarm.

Mary gave a little cry of dismay as she, too, saw her from the carriage window.

Certainly Kate, with the white shawl over her shoulders and floating behind her as she ran noiselessly over the snow, appeared strange and unearthly enough at a little distance.

Dr. Daker got out quickly.

"Oh!" said Kate, with a sigh of relief, because she was so glad to see them there alive and well.

"Miss Montague!" exclaimed the Doctor, in grave astonishment.

"Is it Kate?" asked Mary wonderingly.

"Miss Montague, *yn wir!*" cried Edward Edwards.

"Miss Montague!" repeated Dr. Daker, still more gravely than before.

Kate had at first been struggling for breath; now she was overwhelmed with confusion. What would he think of her rushing to meet him like that? What must they all think?

"Oh!" she said again, with a little gasp made up of inexpressible emotions, "those screams! Did you not hear them? They seemed to be down here."

"What screams?"

"Listen," she said.

They listened a few moments. Dead silence reigned around.

Kate was almost overpowered with dismay.

"They were terrible," she said faintly. "I thought someone was being murdered."

"Come into the carriage," said Dr. Daker, in his most authoritative tone.

He rather thought Kate must be delirious. At any rate, she had completely revolutionized his latest ideas about her. He felt bitter and sarcastic in his disappointment, and could not refrain from muttering to himself, as he assisted her in and prepared to walk up the steep drive, that girls were always fancying things.

Kate overheard him, and was still more dismayed and vexed.

But the next moment they all heard a shrill, wailing cry.

"There," said Kate, "that is it again."

"It is an owl," said Dr. Daker laughing. "Why, Miss Montague, have you never heard an owl before?"

"I had never heard an owl hoot like that before," said Kate, "and you may laugh as much as you like; I don't care."

And she turned her head away, being sadly hurt and angry.

"I am sure," said Mary, slipping her hand into Kate's in her own endearing way, "if I had not been sitting here with that strong clown of a Tom"—smiling up at him—"so near, I should have been dreadfully frightened! And it's not fair of you to laugh, Tom, for it must have been a fearful feeling for Kate to have, that she was running to the rescue of someone who was being murdered."

"And how *brave* it was of her," said Dr. Daker, in a voice which thrilled Kate with its earnestness. "Miss Montague, if you only knew how I admire you."

Kate did not speak; perhaps she could not.

"Miss Montague," he continued, looking into the carriage as it went slowly up the drive, and speaking in the most tenderly remorseful tones, "forgive my rudeness, and the dulness of comprehension which has made it necessary for that child to point out your courage."

He took his hat off as he said so, but Kate did not see him, for she was looking down and trying to hide her tears.

"And what," continued the Doctor, covering her hand for a moment with his, "did you imagine these slight hands would be able to achieve in the way of rescuing the sufferer, or supposing the murderer or murderers unknown had turned on you?"

Kate made no reply. She could not yet.

"Don't tease her, Tom," said Mary. "I am sure she has been very much shaken, and I know she would like you not to say a word about it to-night to anyone."

"I am not usually garrulous," replied her brother; "but there is the coachman."

"Oh! I had forgotten Edwards," said Kate in dismay. "Could you make him understand that I mistook the owl's voice for that of someone in danger?"

Dr. Daker endeavoured to do so, and apparently succeeded, for Edwards tried to make him understand in return that owls did make uncommonly ugly noises on very cold nights, which he thought might be due to the fact that the branches of the trees were so chilly for them to rest upon.

"Thank you," said Kate gratefully, when

these mutual explanations had taken place; for it was no small kindness to linger talking to a Welshman who understood so little English in the cool night air; yet Dr. Daker thought it of sufficient importance that her conduct should not be misunderstood even by the servants.

Kate got out of the carriage as soon as they were near the house and went in unobserved.

When the long-awaited-for guests had been welcomed with Mr. and Mrs. Hughes' usual kindness, they accounted for their lateness by the fact that there had been a slight railway accident, which had delayed their train two or three hours. And, as misfortunes sometimes do not come alone, they had found the road from Melynbrehedyn almost impassable with the deep snow; the brougham had stuck fast more than once, and some of the harness was broken.

"Never mind that so long as you are safe," said Mr. Hughes heartily. "Broken harness is nothing to what broken bones would have been!"

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

Again at Christmas did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth ;
The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas Eve.

“ IN MEMORIAM.”

A BRIGHT, light, gladsome morning. Sunshine resting on the frosty window-panes, on the smooth unbroken surface of the snow, and on the hard, downtrodden tracks which many feet have worn upon the most frequented places. Sunshine lighting up here and there a patch of green where the snow has fallen or been shaken off the trees and shrubs ; sunshine brightening many a rosy face, and bringing many a tinge of colour to pale and sallow cheeks ; sunshine everywhere, from the poorest hovel in the neighbourhood to the comfortable houses of the landed proprietors all about Taliesin Hall and Melynbrehedyn, and causing Hugh, in

what he calls his "land of exile," to take a more hopeful view of life and of his situation, and peering in at Jack, in busy London, as he pores over his books, till he smiles and begins to think it will not be so very long, after all, before he sees the bright spring days which are to take him Walesward. But all this sunshine is so pale and evanescent in its nature, and so destitute of vital warmth, that it scarcely makes any impression upon the snow, except to impart to it an extra lustre, which only very finely strung and highly wrought imaginations can construe into the faintest of all faint suggestions of a thaw.

At Taliesin a strange, fantastic-looking object is standing just outside the garden at the top of the steep carriage-drive. At first it seems a curious combination of white and scarlet berries and green and variegated leaves, but above them all Kate's face looks out serenely—nay more, with an air of intense satisfaction. Her cheeks are flushed, and her eyes are bright and animated.

She is waiting for Mary and Fannie, who have returned to the house to fetch some-

thing before they accompany her to the little iron church.

“Kate, hold this for me,” and “Let me hang this upon you till I come back,” they had said, playfully suspending upon her the share of the Christmas decorations they had each undertaken to carry, as well as what she was taking herself.

So Kate is decidedly laden with the pretty trophies of her and Fannie's handiwork, and she scarcely dare stir lest she should spoil something—or prick herself.

She is thinking, as she stands there, of nothing very definite, only she has an impression, and it is a very vivid one, that Dr. Daker is considerably more courteous to her than he was, and that he is evidently as desirous as herself that they may become good friends; and in her mind she hears again those earnest, tender words he said to her the night before, which somehow seem more beautiful and real, coming from him, than any she has ever heard.

It is like a dream that the Doctor should have spoken to her in that way—like a happy, unexpected dream.

But it is not wise to dream in the day time, Kate!—not wise to stand there dreaming on the snow, with an active little mind bent upon mischief, and longing to distinguish itself, in the near neighbourhood. You had better have been on the watch, Kate; then you would not have been thus ruthlessly surprised.

For suddenly she is struck on the right cheek, a sharp, stinging blow, which makes her give a little cry, while half-melted yet icy snow slips down her neck and fastens itself inextricably among her neatly-plaited hair. Her hands are full; she cannot shake it off! Oh! it is too bad—too bad indeed!

She turns indignantly to look round. Dr. Daker is coming from the house in evident haste. Certainly it is not he.

“Did I hit you, Kate?” asks Rice, somewhat superfluously, seeing he is clapping his hands with joy at the achievement, as he runs towards her from the opposite direction. “Oh! wasn’t it a good shot? Stop a minute!”

And the little rogue goes to the smooth snow on the nearest lawn and begins to make

another snowball as quickly as his small red hands can do so.

Kate looks helplessly at him. Her hands are fastened. She has no time to run away even if she could with that load of evergreens. She tries persuasion.

"Rice, dear," she says, oh! so coaxingly, "wait till I have put down these wreaths and things. I will have such a nice snowball match with you if you will please wait until I am ready to begin."

But all in vain. Rice laughs disdainfully.

"I am not going to be so foolish," he says. "It's just a good chance for me now, and I'll snowball you, I'll snowball you till all your hair comes down, Kate, and you'll just look like the picture of the mermaid in Pollie's new scrap book."

And up rises a triumphant little hand, holding a great snowball, while Rice, with his head sagaciously on one side, calculates which would be the best part of Kate's head at which to aim.

However, happily for her, help is at hand, for Dr. Daker arrives just in time to seize

the small boy and shake the snowball from his grasp.

"You little outlaw! You tremendous, unprecedented, unmitigated disturber of the public peace!" he says, with terrible gravity. "To hit a lady, and one who at the moment is unable to protect herself! You!"—and he glares at little Rice till his face grows very red and he hangs his head, while the corners of his mouth tremble ominously.

Then Kate comes to them, and thinking the child is overwhelmed with shame and sorrow at his thoughtless conduct being held up so severely to such exceeding censure, she tries to comfort him and give Dr. Daker a better insight into his tiny character.

"Rice meant no harm, Doctor, thank you all the same for coming to my assistance," she said hurriedly; "but you do not know what friends we are, and that Rice was only playing. And, Rice dear, never mind. Dr. Daker was not aware what a long-standing promise to snowball me it was that you were fulfilling, nor how vastly you enjoy a snowball match."

"No," whimpered Rice, his ready tears overflowing at the sound of the sympathetic voice, "and it was such a—such a lovely snowball, and it would have hit your forehead so beautiful! And now it is all spoiled, and I shall never have such a chance again," whereupon he began to roar lustily.

"What a very cruel little boy! Why, Rice, you are altogether demoralized!" exclaimed Dr. Daker, trying not to laugh, while Kate looked rather puzzled and began to suspect that her sympathy had been a little thrown away.

"It is difficult, Miss Montague, it is exceedingly difficult to form a correct estimate of the actions of another, unless one is acquainted with his peculiar mental organization and the train of circumstances which have led to the given result," said the Doctor, contemplating Rice fixedly, but evidently not thinking about him as an individual just then.

"What a fearfully ponderous speech, Tom," said Mary, coming up with Fannie. "At whom were you directing it? Was it at

my little Rice? I am sure he would rather have had a snowball. Wouldn't you, Rice?"

"He's spoiled mine," sobbed Rice. "And I don't want any more." And he turned round and ran away.

"Such is life," said Dr. Daker sententially, turning away too.

Kate was very thoughtful during that walk to the iron church. She was sure the Doctor had been speaking significantly, and she was trying to find out what he meant.

Mary and Fannie scarcely noticed her pre-occupied attention, for they had much to say to each other, and they were laughing and chatting merrily all the way. When they had nearly reached their destination Fannie, looking back, discovered that Dr. Daker was following them with Hubert.

"I have never known Tom do such a thing before," said Mary, "as voluntarily to join a party of church decorators. Such work is not at all in his line."

"Perhaps he is not coming in," said Kate; as they entered the church.

However he followed them in, and made a

general offer of assistance. After which he exerted himself somewhat clumsily at the unwonted occupation, and before long succeeded in slightly damaging a rather fragile wreath of Fannie's making.

Of course he was very sorry, and rather hurt because he overheard Fannie, who felt vexed about her work, especially as Kate had warned her that the string she used was not strong enough, remark to her brother that it was like putting an elephant into a china shop to allow him to do such things. Finally, after having borne with stolid indifference as much scolding as would have disheartened most amateurs, he concentrated all his energies on handing Kate string, tin tacks, &c., as she required them.

"I think he will be safe now, and that I can leave him under your care, Kate," said Mary, passing them on her way to the door. "You will not be in any more mischief, will you, Tom dear?"

"Where may you be going?" asked her brother. "You speak as if you intended washing your hands of me, and quitting this sublunary sphere altogether."

"I am only going to gather Fannie a few more red berries. I know there is a holly tree a little further on the town road."

"So there is," said Kate, "about twenty yards beyond the stile. But make haste back," she added smilingly aside, "for I can't be answerable for your brother."

Yet he was very quiet, very submissive and obedient to Kate's slightest hint. And at last he had shown himself so docile that even Fannie did not object to his taking a more active part in the proceedings.

"These will preach perhaps as loudly as any sermon," he said once, as he nailed up a beautiful cross of snow berries above the Communion Table.

"Do you despise sermons?" asked Hubert, who was helping him, rather wistfully.

Dr. Daker did not appear to hear him. He finished what he was doing, and went a little way off to see if the cross were straight, and to judge of the general effect.

Hubert repeated his question.

"Certainly not. I do a little in that way myself occasionally," he added. "I am afraid Miss Montague," turning to Kate,

who was kneeling by the lectern, fastening a wreath round it, "could tell you something about that."

"How?" asked Kate, without looking up.

"I am afraid I troubled you with something of the sort once."

"When?"

"On the hill above this little church one lovely evening."

"I assure you I liked what you said then very much, and still more when I had time to think it over a little," said Kate, looking up at him.

"You did?" exclaimed the Doctor in glad surprise.

"Yes—and I looked for the passage of Dante's you quoted, and shall always remember it."

"I forget exactly what it was."

"And in *His* will is our tranquillity," repeated Kate softly. "Miss Havergal said something like it, too," she added, "when she wrote, 'And in perfect acquiescence is there not perfect rest.'"

"And it had all been said long before by

the prophets, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon Thee, because he trusteth in Thee,' " said Dr. Daker.

"And entire *trust* includes perfect acquiescence and perfect rest too," said Kate, half to herself.

Dr. Daker was delighted. He forgot all about the decorating, and leaned over the lectern, talking to Kate, while she, not forgetting it at all, but working busily, kept looking up at him, and answering from the depths of a well-stored mind.

Presently, from speaking of the numbers of times things had to be said and lessons repeated by the different instruments of the Almighty before they would obtain anything like general credence, and of *His* Divine patience, they began conversing about different discoveries and more particularly of the Rosetta stone.

"I think it was singular," said Kate, "that after the stone was discovered a whole quarter of a century should elapse before Champollion succeeded in deciphering the third inscription."

"It must have been exceedingly difficult," said Dr. Daker, "and he only succeeded after hard toil. Just think, he had to read it by means of the other two."

"What did it say?" asked Hubert, who was listening intelligently.

"The triple inscription contained a message of congratulation from the priests to their King."

"Was that all? Then it did not much matter."

"Oh, but it did," said Kate eagerly, "for a clue was found thus, by means of which the hieroglyphics to be seen on ancient Egyptian monuments, buildings, &c., were made readable."

"The stone was, in fact, a sort of key-stone, Hubert," said Dr. Daker, "which showed how those other hieroglyphics might be read."

"I see," said the boy thoughtfully. "Where is it now?"

"In the British Museum."

"I am always so glad," said Kate, "that those old inscriptions confirm the Scriptural

accounts of ancient history ; the reverse would have been so dreadful."

"We cannot be too thankful for their additional evidence," said the Doctor.

Then they spoke of the wonderful preservation of some of the oldest manuscripts of the sacred writings.

"No one knows what may be discovered yet," said Dr. Daker ; "another Gospel might be found."

"I wish it might," said Kate, quickly.

"Why?"

Kate did not immediately reply, and he went on—"I don't think if a hundred more Gospels were to be found they could teach us more beautiful truths than we have in the four—but they might perhaps make them more lucid by additional explanations."

"That is it," said Kate, in a low voice ; "that is what I want."

Before Dr. Daker could reply, Fannie came up, declaring that all the decorating was finished now, and that she could not imagine where Mary was. "It is more than an hour since she went to fetch me some holly," she said.

"More than an hour!" exclaimed Kate and Dr. Daker in surprise.

"Of course it is," said Fannie; "but you have been so busy talking that it is not to be expected you should know how the time passes. Dr. Daker has done absolutely nothing for quite half an hour, and you, Kate, have held that piece of ivy in your hand for the last five minutes without stirring!"

"Because I have finished my work and have nowhere to put it," said Kate, with gentle dignity.

"I am rather surprised," Fannie went on in a very superior tone, "that you, who profess to be so good, should chatter so over such work as this. I must say mother wouldn't like it."

"It would have been wrong if we *had* been chattering," replied Kate.

"We were speaking of things worthy of being discussed even in a church," said Dr. Daker gravely.

"Oh, I know I'm very cross," said Fannie, penitently, "but really when people are never

spoken to by any chance, and are *never* answered when they ask questions—it is *trying*.”

“I beg your pardon if we were really so remiss,” said Kate, “but I, for one, never heard you till you came up just now.”

“Nor I,” said Dr. Daker.

“But Hubert did,” said Fannie, “because he signed to me to be quiet.”

Hubert coloured. “What you were saying was so much more interesting,” he muttered.

“But it was not so to Fannie, who was not listening,” said Kate.

“Hubert, we are all bound up together in this life, like a bundle of faggots,” said Dr. Daker, “and it makes it very distressing for our neighbours if we do not consider them a little sometimes, and learn to look at things occasionally from their point of view. We must none of us live to ourselves. And there is a sermon for you, my boy, so now you cannot say I never preach.” He smiled pleasantly as he spoke, and Hubert liked him more than ever.

It was strange how the dreamy, bookish boy admired this man of philosophy and action.

Mary had gone for the holly, looking very bonnie in her little turban, with one splendid crimson feather round it, above her dark hair, and her well-fitting dark cloth dress, but really feeling restless and ill at ease. How was it Frank had never appeared? What could be the reason nobody mentioned him at all? Could anything be the matter, she wondered, as she went. And she did not hurry back, not she. For she had not gone far before she met him sauntering slowly towards Taliesin Hall.

Of course it was necessary for him to explain how it was that business had prevented his being there the evening before to receive them, and for Mary to relate how she and her brother had been detained until so late by repeated little accidents. Mutual remarks had to be made on all this information; and many other things occurred to them which it seemed desirable should be discussed. Then there were the holly-berries to be gathered, and, the tree being mostly

covered with snow, the branches had to be shaken cautiously with Frank's stick, and the snow beaten off before the holly could be touched. And Frank was so very slow about gathering it, but the fact was he liked lingering there with Mary, who looked so bright and pretty as she stood trying to catch each piece he broke off for her. And was it, could it possibly be their fault that they only arrived at the little church as the others were leaving it?

"Well," said Fannie, "I can't say much for your speed, Mary, I must say you've been a long time bringing that holly."

"Mary is like Dickens' black servant in America, who was perpetually going for something, forgetting what it was on the way and never returning; at least his master mentioned that as his chronic failing," said Dr. Daker.

"The snow was on the tree, but I, that is, we have got all this," said Mary, holding it up and looking quite distressed.

"I don't want it now," said Fannie, who felt generally ill-used.

"I think," said Kate, taking pity on

Mary's evident embarrassment, "as we have finished decorating the church we will take this home for the house."

Dr. Daker walked back beside Fannie, and exerted himself to entertain her; an act of kindness which Kate thought very just and right, though she felt sorry that their conversation could not be continued. She walked with Hubert, while Mary and Frank lingered behind.

After dinner they all sat round an enormous yule-log, which blazed, sparkled, crackled, hissed, and then had periodical fits of apathy, when it would do nothing but smoulder sullenly until someone poked it, upon which occasions it emitted showers of merry sparks which flew riotously up the chimney, leaving the log a blacker and more obstinate fact than ever.

"Won't they ever come down, mother, not if I was to watch a long, long time?" asked little Pollie pathetically.

"No, of course they won't, Pollie," said Rice, with strong disdain for such a childish notion. "They've quite gone out. The

chimney was one big extinguisher and it snuffed all the sparks out."

"There's an extinguisher coming for you little folks," said their father, as a servant entered for the children, who had been allowed to remain up longer than usual as it was Christmas-eve.

"Well, I don't care," said Pollie, "so long as the sparks went out," and she trotted off contentedly with the maid, while Rice, on the contrary, stopped to argue the matter a little longer.

"Pollie is a philosopher," observed Dr. Daker dryly, when the children had gone.

"Ah! it is not everyone who will submit so readily to newly-discovered laws of nature," said her father.

"All have to submit sooner or later, so they might as well do so at first," returned the Doctor, and then he told them many strange and interesting things.

Kate had never heard him talk so well. She did not know that it was his custom thus to unfold his conversational powers when he was well assured that he had an appreciative

audience. And to-night, though he occasionally addressed his host by name, Kate was his audience, for her and her alone he talked—at least everyone else only held a very subordinate place in his consideration. As Kate listened and perceived his noble enthusiasm for all that was great and good, she felt humiliated that she should ever have thought he was not to be compared to Frank, who sat there, looking *distrained* and uneasy because the conversation had taken such a high tone.

As soon as there was a pause the latter suggested that perhaps Miss Daker would play a little for them.

Mary rose at once. "What shall I play?" she asked.

"Play 'Les Cloches du Monastère,' as there are no Christmas bells to be heard here," said her brother.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLYGAIN.

Commemoration holy—

* * * *

By the deep soul-moving sense
Of religious eloquence,—
By visual pomp, and by the tie
Of sweet and threatening harmony ;

* * * *

While the—choir attendant,

* * * *

Provoke all sympathies to raise
Songs of victory and praise—.

WORDSWORTH.

At what seemed to the sleepers at Taliesin Hall an extraordinary hour of the night, a sleepy chamber-maid stole softly from one bedroom door to another, with much knocking and a short but graphic request that they would all please to awake.

“What o’clock is it?” asked two or three of the hapless victims of this peculiarly aggravating application, in tones of mingled indignation and regret.

"It's just four by the kitchen clock," was the reassuring reply.

Whereupon there were smothered groans and sighs.

"What in the world do you mean by awaking me at this hour?" exclaimed Dr. Daker severely, when the summons came to his door. He was not accustomed thus to have his English independence thwarted and broken in upon.

"Please, sir, it's the Plygain, and me and cook have been sitting up all night so as to be ready."

The Plygain! Dr. Daker had quite forgotten Mrs. Hughes having mentioned the evening before that there was an early Welsh choral service at the iron church, which her family always attended. This then was what it meant—to get up at a most untimely hour on this particularly cold, dark Christmas morning to hear some carols sung in what was to him an unintelligible language.

"I will not go," he said to himself. "I can think happy, peaceful Christmas thoughts at home, without making a martyr of myself unnecessarily."

The next moment, however, he felt rebuked, and changed his determination with considerable celerity. For he had heard the sound of Kate and Fannie's voices giving directions to the servants and trying to rouse the more determined sleepers, as if they had been up and about for some time, and it was one of the most natural things in the world that people should deny themselves a few hours sleep in order to keep up a religious observance.

Fannie was hammering away at James's door and calling upon him to remember that he had promised to go this year.

"I never said so," proceeded in very resentful, not to say surly accents from within.

"You did, James, you were sure about it last Christmas Day, when everyone but you had been."

"That's long ago. I have forgotten all about that."

"You said the other day that you would see."

"Well, I did see, last night."

"And then you said you thought you would go."

"But I see and think differently this morning."

Fannie began to try her powers of persuasion.

"How much, or rather how little will you take to go away?" cried her exasperated brother.

Fannie was very indignant at this.

"You need not speak as if I were a barrel-organ or an importunate beggar," she said, "I am only troubling you for your own good."

"Well, go away then."

"*Will* you get up and come with us?"

"I'll think about it."

"Never mind him, Fannie," said her father, on his way downstairs, "I'm going with you myself, and there will be Hubert and the Doctor."

"I don't believe he'll go," said Fannie; "he did not seem to like the idea last night, and it always looks worse in the morning."

She went into Kate's room to finish her complaint, but Kate was downstairs busily superintending preparations for the early breakfast. For having been well informed

on the subject by Mrs. Hughes and Fannie beforehand, she had entered into the spirit of it all quite zealously. To her mind there was something beautiful in the custom of every one, rich and poor alike, rising thus early in the morning once a year, to celebrate with songs the joyful occasion which a choir of angels first descended to proclaim.

In half-an-hour the whole family, with the exception of the three little ones and James, whose thinking about it did not result in any definite shape for the next four hours, were partaking of breakfast, hot coffee and hot everything (almost), under the auspices of Kate.

"Oh, Kate, what a treasure you are!" said Mr. Hughes once; "when I think of the times we have gone to that iron church, on Christmas mornings, cold and uncomforted because the kettle would not boil!"

"And whose fault was that, Rice? You know very well that you would never allow me to sit up, and there is no trusting to servants," began Mrs. Hughes indignantly.

"Oh, my dear," said her husband, "I

meant no reflection on anyone, I was merely remarking—” and then he stopped abruptly, in mock consternation at being entirely unable to recollect any perfectly harmless remark that he might have been going to make.

“Then I’ll thank you not to remark anything in future,” replied his wife shortly.

“No, my dear, of course not—never again, not if you were to ask me ever so,” said Mr. Hughes, with such surprising meekness, that everyone, Mrs. Hughes included, began to laugh as if it were the best joke in the world.

“I am afraid, Fannie, you are feeling very much worn out,” said the Doctor, when they had all become a little more composed.

“What with?” asked Fannie curtly.

“Your exertions in the way of waking people and of making remarks, not wanting in wisdom and profundity, upon the vague probabilities attending the movements of others.”

Fannie’s colour rose.

“I did not think you would hear,” she said.

"It was rather too bad, Miss Montague, was it not," he went on turning to Kate, "to make a personal and not very complimentary remark about my powers of endurance, just outside my door?"

"Why, Fannie?" said Kate laughingly.

"I am sure I said nothing very bad," said Fannie. "I can't be hard upon other people, for I never rise early myself, except on Christmas Day."

"And then you feel that your doing so is a special duty you have to fulfil," said her father, "which, like many other self-imposed duties, seems easier to perform than the ordinary 'little things' which are yet so very important—altogether vastly more so than the specials."

"Like the young ladies who can get up to go to early morning services, but not to make their father's and brothers' breakfasts," said Dr. Daker dryly.

"Tom, I think you are most distressingly and offensively personal!" exclaimed Mary, deeply injured.

"Why, my dear child, I did not know you

were up ! You are quite hidden behind Miss Montague's tremendous coffee-pot. Let us look at you. Can I believe my eyes ? Is Mary up at—what time is it ? ” and he pulled his watch out with tremendous effect, and turned the face towards the others with an air of speechless astonishment.

“ Come on, Mary,” said Fannie, “ we will go and get ready. I have always observed that early rising is not conducive to good temper.”

“ Poor child, what grim Christmas mornings she must have had all her life if this is the sum-total of her experiences,” said her father, more gravely than the occasion seemed to warrant. Then the ladies having gone to dress for the cold walk, he turned to Dr. Daker and said earnestly, “ You have no idea, Daker, what a different place this is since Kate came to live with us. Sometimes I think when we took her into our family it was really like entertaining an angel un-awares.”

“ The result, indeed, seems most felicitous,” said the Doctor, “ but I should like to know,

if you would not think the inquiry intrusive, how you came to do that? Your brother did give me some account, but I can scarcely think his explanation sufficient."

"Ah! poor Hugh, it was correct enough from his point of view."

"Then he was not successful," said Dr. Daker. "I augured as much from his absence."

"No, of course he was not. I never thought he would be when I found out what Kate really was—she was not one to be won by money, or beauty either for that matter."

"Ah!" said Dr. Daker, in a tone of relief.

But now they were interrupted by the entrance of Kate herself, who begged them both to get ready for church, for Mrs. Hughes was so afraid they would be late, and the Plygain began at half-past five.

"Did you really stay up all night, Miss Montague, to look after creature-comforts for us all?" asked Dr. Daker, as he went for his overcoat and hat.

"Oh, no," she said, "but I told the servants last evening exactly how I wished

everything to be arranged, and they were so anxious to oblige me that, when I came down this morning, I found two of them had actually been sitting up all night lest they should oversleep themselves."

It was intensely cold, as they walked to the iron church, and intensely dark as well. They had, of course, more than one lantern with them, but these Mr. Hughes declared only seemed to make the darkness more conspicuous, or the night more hideous, which was the hasty way in which he worded it.

Mary, almost lost in great furs and a thick veil, and being consequently deprived of what little sight she might have been able to acquire of the way, linked herself on to her brother's arm, in such a helpless state of confusion that he was obliged to take care of her instead of walking with Kate as he had intended.

When the little church was reached, and they had all gone in out of the darkness and joined those who had already assembled, they found the place was crowded with eager, earnest people, many of whom had walked miles over the snow in order to be present.

Mr. Richards was there taking a lively interest in the singing, and having for that purpose kindly left the town church, with its efficient choir, and come up among the hills because his fellow-curate was not musical enough to take the lead on this occasion.

The church was plentifully supplied with lamps and candles, the light of which fell happily upon the pretty decorations, making them glisten and speak loudly. Kate thought, remembering Dr. Daker's words.

There was a short service, consisting of some of the morning prayers, a little sermon or address, and one hymn, "Oh, come all ye faithful," sung in Welsh by the whole congregation; and then there were many, many carols sung either as solos or in parts, amongst which Kate particularly liked *Wedi Edrwoch*, *Wedi Disgwyl*, which haunted her for long afterwards. It was sung by an old man, with a quavering tremulous voice, which yet rendered the soothing strains with admirable expression.

"Old John Jones is proud of his power to sing that carol, and well he may be," said Mr. Hughes, in a low voice to Kate, while

they were waiting for three or four people to come forward and sing one of a very different description.

Some of the carols were melancholy and rather tedious, some very noisy and wild, some sweet yet sad. And the singers were as diverse as their songs, sometimes a stout woman would come forward and sing in a rather shrill, loud voice, then a shy youth in sweet, almost mournful tones, after which a solemn-looking man would sing some ponderous, dirge-like verses, or some group of old and young together would give a beautiful quaint melody with very pleasing effect.

In the early morning light the congregation dispersed and went home rapidly over the cold white snow. It was freezing all the time, and there was still no sign of any approaching thaw.

Mr. Hughes lingered to invite Mr. Richards to come and breakfast at Taliesin Hall, but he refused, having promised to appear at the Rectory at a very early hour.

"I am afraid we cannot take you to the town church to-day, because of the impass-

able state of the road for driving, which you have already proved," said Mr. Hughes to Dr. Daker, who had waited outside for him, thus a second time missing a chance of walking with Kate, who had gone on with his sister.

"I assure you I shall enjoy the quiet," replied the Doctor.

And he did enjoy the quiet thoroughly, but more especially a little talk he had with Kate, in the course of the day in which they compared their experience of Wales and the Welsh, and were as happy in the result as people usually are when they find their ideas exactly coincide.

But we are anticipating; as Kate, who was walking first with Mary, approached Taliesin Hall, they met a very forlorn and dejected-looking object which proved to be the stable-boy, who had remained up all night, he said, because he could not persuade anyone to promise to awake him in time for the Plygain, and, alas, he was in his working-dress.

"Then have you not been?" asked Kate.

Whereupon the boy, who could speak English well, related that he had gone to the stables about four o'clock to attend to the horses before he went to church, and there, being a very "growing boy," with a slow and rather lazy temperament (to which last fact was doubtless owing his fellow-servants' unwillingness to oblige him), he had put down his lantern and unfortunately fallen asleep; in which happy condition he had continued until the daylight stealing into the stables had awakened him to loud and unavailing regrets.

Mary's gentle heart was so touched that she proffered him half-a-crown, which he rejected with noble scorn, and no doubt afterwards regretted not having accepted. Kate's kind words fared little better. The youth refused all sorts of consolation, and was extremely sensitive on the subject for a long time.

In the evening the Hughes and their visitors attended service again in the little church, and heard Mr. Morgan preach to a crowded congregation in Welsh, and for five

minutes to a far smaller number in English, as his custom was, now that he knew there was always one present, at least, who understood no Welsh. His sermon in that language seemed to be very eloquent. Kate wished that she could understand it, but as that was impossible, she sat gazing at the white cross and allowing it to preach to her some very sweet and pleasant thoughts until, alas that we have to record it, she fell asleep, to the exceeding perturbation of Mrs. Hughes, who was too far off to arouse her.

A col dard, k walkhome, and a long, pleasant talk around the fire afterwards concluded Kate's first and only Christmas Day in Wales, for before that time next year many things, as unlooked for as they were eventful were destined to take place.

CHAPTER IX.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

'Tis hard to smile when one would weep ;
To speak when one would silent be ;
To wake when one would wish to sleep,
And wake to agony.

MRS. HUNTER.

"Do you like skating, Daker?" enquired James, one evening in Christmas week, when he had returned rather earlier than usual from the Rectory.

"Yes, it is delightful exercise," replied the Doctor, who was sitting by one of the tables in the drawing-room, gloating over the first proofs of his little book which he had received that morning.

"That's right, because we are all to go down in the morning and join the Rectory people to make up a skating party. The ice is in first-rate order."

"I rather doubt it. Why, it was thawing the day before yesterday."

“Only for a short time, sufficiently to melt all the snow that had collected over the ice, and it has been freezing hard ever since. The ice is as smooth and clear as glass.”

“All right. I will take your word for it,” and Dr. Daker turned back to his proofs with a sigh of satisfaction. The printers had done their work well, there were no mistakes worth mentioning, and he was delighted with what he considered the peculiar lucidity of his ideas, now that they were disentangled from the puzzling, blotched, cramped, crabbed writing in which he had sent them to press. His eyes sparkled with satisfaction. He only wanted someone to join him in admiring appreciation of his work. And it must not be thought for one moment that he was vain because he was full of the strange new joy of feeling his wings a little in this his first literary flight of any length. His astonished wonder at the result showed that he had but an humble opinion of himself originally. And soon his little paroxysm of delight will have subsided, and his new pleasure or, at least, the keen

edge of it, together with his first little book will have retired into comparative obscurity.

Looking round restlessly in search of sympathy, his eyes fell on Kate, who was sewing at a little work-table quite in a corner of the large pleasant room. She was conveniently alone, and looked very calm and thoughtful.

"Can I have your attention a moment?" he asked, going across to her with his papers.

"Certainly," said Kate; yet she looked troubled at the sight of the proof-sheets and hesitated to touch them. They reminded her of her father so strongly for the moment that she felt a little overcome. "Will you tell me first what Mr. James is proposing to them all?" she asked to gain time, while, avoiding the Doctor's eyes, she looked across the room to where James was standing talking to the others.

"Some plan of his for to-morrow. A skating party I believe," replied Dr. Daker impatiently.

"With the Rectory family?" asked Kate.

"Yes," said he shortly, thinking that

women had no idea of the relative importance of things. There was his book, which was to teach some most valuable facts and theories to countless numbers of people, and Kate, from whom he should certainly have expected something different, thought it of less importance than a few hours' skating. He felt hurt, besides, that she was not more interested in what so nearly concerned himself. He opened the packet slowly and spread the curling, crackling slips of paper out upon her work-table, little knowing how painfully it reminded her of her father.

He did not know her father had been an author. But he did know that she was showing a total want of interest in what was so absorbingly interesting to himself. Authors are proverbially sensitive, and he was, in spite of all his learning and philosophy, such a young one that his book meant all the world to him just then.

"Kate," called Fannie, "come and hear what we are going to do to-morrow."

Kate started, gave a little deprecating, half-querulous smile to the Doctor, begged

him, in an almost inaudible voice, to excuse her for a moment and went.

He did not know that she could scarcely see anything as she crossed the room for the dimness of her eyes, and that it was all she could do to regain her composure before she joined the others. He only thought she went slowly and lingeringly as if she were in no hurry to return, and he gathered up the proof-sheets in high dudgeon, and left the room.

Disturbed and unhappy, he seized his hat and stick and went out for a walk, over the frozen snow, in the pale moonlight, from which he did not return until everyone but Mr. Hughes had retired for the night.

He was both disappointed and mortified. He had thought lately that Kate was beginning to care for him—it seemed plain now that she did not. He forgot all the nice talks he and she had recently had together, and all his old doubts and suspicions of her short-comings, mental and otherwise, returned with the more force that they had been completely banished for a time. Those

sceptical ideas of his about the vanity and foolishness of beautiful women came rushing back upon his mind.

"They are all alike," he murmured.

He little knew that Kate could not sleep for hours that night, because she felt so sorry that those old memories, coming suddenly upon her with such overwhelming force, had made her appear discourteous and unsympathetic where she would least of all have liked to have been so. "Why was I so weak?" she asked herself, and she seemed to feel again that thrill of intense disappointment which she had experienced when, on returning to her place, she had found him gone. She had looked for him all the rest of the evening, but he had not appeared, and she was obliged reluctantly to believe that he was offended with her, and that, if so, perhaps his temper was a little faulty, for he might have waited five minutes.

By-and-bye she fell asleep and dreamt that Dr. Daker and she were conversing most happily together, and then she awoke, to lament that it was but a dream, and that the

ideal friendship she had hoped for was not prospering.

The next day, the frost still continuing and the roads being still impassable for the carriage, a large sleigh used for carrying hay and gorse off some of the fields which were too hilly for any other vehicle, was brought to the door, with a cart-horse—not so large as an ordinary English one, but still a fine member of its species—harnessed to it. This imposing animal was somewhat mystified and perplexed by three or four little bells, which Edward Edwards, who was very vain of the achievement, had been instructed to suspend upon it. Two or three skin rugs with scarlet linings and all the gay scarlet and crimson shawls that could be collected brightened up the old sleigh wonderfully, and when the girls in their fur-cloaks had been placed among them the effect was quite unique.

James, who was in high spirits, and who insisted upon adorning himself with a brilliant Scotch-plaid, that he might make a distinguished appearance as driver, Dr. Daker,

in a shaggy-looking very great coat indeed, with his pockets bulging out with mysterious and unwieldy parcels, and Hubert seated themselves with due caution, and away went the sleigh right merrily over the frozen snow, causing considerable astonishment in the village of Penybont, and opening the rustic mind to an unusual and unprecedented extent.

Dr. Daker was taking his camera, and he sat, clutching it and very much absorbed in preserving sundry items appertaining thereto from frequently imminent destruction. His apparent abstraction from any other kind of thought was, in fact, so great that Mary declared it to be impossible to obtain more than a growl from him in response to any question, and she made a general appeal to everybody, and more especially to Kate, to try if they could succeed better. While waiting for Kate's answer the patient evinced a few symptoms of returning animation, but when she rather coldly refused to interfere, he had a sudden relapse again into his old condition.

The Rectory reached, everyone must needs come out to applaud their novel mode of travelling, and to congratulate them on the spirit and elegance of their steed. For the cart-horse, having slowly arrived at the conclusion it was drawing something analogous to a load of very heavy gorse, though one of most extraordinary liveliness, had lost what little animation the bells and one thing or another had roused in it at starting, and now hung its head with great dejection and contemplated the snowy ground with exceeding mournfulness.

"Hush," James said, more than once, "be quiet, you'll frighten our horse," and he held the reins as if he were grasping them to save his life.

"Indeed," cried Mrs. Morgan, completely deceived for the moment, "you must make haste and get out—I don't like the way your horse stands."

Everyone laughed, and, very much discomforted, the good lady perceived her mistake; however, she took no other revenge upon her guests than by commanding them

to come in at once and partake of the luncheon which was awaiting their attention. After that was over the sleigh was again brought round to the door, and Frank, who was there as a matter of course, assisted the ladies into it with his usual care and grace. Kathleen and Sophy took the places before occupied by Dr. Daker and the brothers, who now preferred walking. But, though Kathleen professed to be driving, James continued to fulfil the duties of charioteer, as he walked by the horse's head, to encourage it, he said, to persevere.

Dr. Daker, Hubert, Charley Morgan and Mr. Richards went on first, while Frank hovered about the sleigh, making every variety of delicately beautiful remarks, addressed to no one in particular, but seized and appropriated by Mary (secretly) in the coolest manner possible. She was so sure he meant them all to have a directly personal and most charming application to herself, and he was so sure of it, too, and the uninitiated were so delightfully unsuspecting that it was no wonder the result was satisfactory

in the extreme. Kate alone understood something of what was going on—and she did not approve of it at all. But what could she do? She felt sorry for Mary, yet she did not know how she could caution her and help the gentle little creature to understand something of the character of the man she thought so perfect. For Mary, though so affectionate and still in some points so childish, kept her own counsel in the matter, even saying nothing about it to her dear Kate; indeed she was particularly shy of mentioning Frank to her, because when she first came to Taliesin Hall, it had seemed so obvious that he was paying her attentions, and now she thought Kate probably felt a little hurt that he should prefer herself.

“You will skate with me?” said Frank slightly lowering his voice as he addressed Mary.

“I cannot skate very well,” she replied timidly.

“But I will help you. It will be quite easy, you shall just take hold of my hands and I will pull you along.”

"Oh, if you will?" she said, with a ring of childish gladness in her voice, which went to Kate's heart, "it will be *so* delightful."

"Yes, it is nice," said Fannie, "I hope one of the gentlemen will help me in that way," and she looked rather grave for a few moments, as she thought how pleasant it would have been if Jack had been with them.

"Why does not her brother look after her," thought Kate, still preoccupied with her fears for Mary's happiness. "Mary," she said desperately, "you promised that you and I would help each other, as we are neither of us very proficient."

Mary's countenance fell.

"So I did, I had forgotten," she said. "Mr. Frank," and she looked wistfully at him, "could you—would you be so very kind as to help us both? We might skate with you in turns."

"I should be charmed," murmured the unhappy man in as lively tones as he could assume under the circumstances.

"No, no," said Kate, smiling in spite of her uneasiness, "I am sure that would not do."

"Why not?" asked Mary.

"Because—well, for one thing I am so selfish, I should want too much help—I must have *undivided attention*."

Dr. Daker, who had lingered just then to examine a rock they were passing, overheard the last sentence, and raising his head, looked Kate straight in the face. He went on again, thinking it strange she should have uttered those words, so expressive of what he had felt the evening before—his thoughts were full of the evening before, they had been all the morning—and remembering she had had but divided attention for him then.

"I have no doubt Hubert will help me," Kate went on quickly, trying to forget the reproach in that earnest gaze. "Yes, I am sure he will give me his assistance, we are such capital friends," and she looked at him as he strode on first, trying to keep near Dr. Daker and not lose a word of his discourse.

Mary followed the direction of her eyes.

"Oh, there's Tom," she said, "I had forgotten him, he will help you, Kate. I will ask him to do so."

"Please don't, Mary," said Kate quite beseechingly. "I will not hear of anything of the sort. Hubert will put my skates on and help me to set off."

"As if you would be left to Hubert!" cried Fannie overhearing, and interrupting a very mild flirtation she had just begun with Charlie Morgan, who had dropped behind to speak to her, to throw in the exclamation. Fannie never for a moment—but perhaps that is rather too much to say—never for more than a couple of hours or so at once, forgot Jack, and she made herself very miserable sometimes with crying over his photograph, which had somehow found its way into her possession, and thinking all sorts of dismal things about the probability of their never meeting again. In fact it was beginning always to trouble her to think about him, and—the instinctive craving after happiness being inherent in our nature—she rather avoided that subject of meditation. He was far away and might be forgetting her all the time, or hateful supposition, *he* might be flirting with someone else, and Charlie was

present, with his half-shy, wholly original speeches, and she had known him all her life and was quite at her ease with him. Besides, she was not accustomed to deliberately weigh her words and acts and pause to reflect where they were leading her. She took life as she found it, and did what seemed the easiest and most pleasant at the time.

Before long they arrived at a large pond, which had been swept and prepared for the skating in the most approved style. Several of the young people in the neighbourhood were already upon it; and the house, or rather mansion close by, had been thrown open for the occasion.

Again there was an eager mustering round the sleigh, to admire and applaud its picturesque appearance and the novelty of the idea. And then Dr. Daker all at once woke up to the fact that it looked so remarkably interesting as it stood on the road by the water's edge, with a background of young larch trees on a hillside, every twig and branch of which was chalked out in the purest snow and frost, that it might be advisable to photograph it there and then.

"Stay where you are," he called frantically, as each young woman prepared to get out; "stay one minute, I will take an instantaneous view of you," and he commenced fixing up his camera on the spot.

"Oh dear, I have cut my finger," said Hubert, who was standing near, trying to alter the strap of one of his skates. He spoke so low that no one but Kate heard him. She looked round quickly, and perceiving that he was very pale, she got out of the sleigh and hurried to him.

"Kate, come back!" cried one or two. But Kate, being intent upon the injured finger, did not heed them.

Dr. Daker looked up impatiently. He was ready to begin, and the most stately figure in the group was missing. Thinking the said figure had done it purposely, he bit his lip with vexation.

"Kate, dear, come back," entreated Mary, mindful of his displeasure.

"Never mind Miss Montague," he said angrily, and he took the photograph without her. However, glancing towards her when it was over, he thought she made such a pretty

picture, as she bent over Hubert's finger, binding it up in her own handkerchief (though he could not see from the way they stood what it was she was doing) that he turned the camera a little and took another photograph with the utmost speed.

That accomplished, he gave royal permission to the fair sleighing-party to get out, which they, not comprehending his last manoeuvre, had hesitated to do.

Frank put Mary's skates on and his own, and then taking her hands, was just starting with her, when she, remembering Kate, called out to her brother.

"Tom, go and help Kate, there's a dear fellow."

"She wants neither your assistance nor mine," replied he, as he finished fastening his own skates.

Mary looked round and saw two or three young men talking to Kate and evidently proffering their assistance. Hubert, too, stood near with Kate's skates in his hand. Frank looked also.

"Yes," he said, with a short sarcastic

laugh, "she is quite able to take care of herself, *quite*."

"You think so?" inquired Dr. Daker pointedly.

"I am sure of it," was the reply.

Dr. Daker skated by himself all the afternoon, that is to say he mingled very little with the others, and did not go near Kate, who was helped along by a variety of means until she began to skate fairly well.

But, alas, the short winter day was speedily at an end, and the darkness of night settled down upon them with what seemed incredible rapidity.

"We have had such a short time, what shall we do?" cried the enthusiastic skaters.

"Why not skate by moonlight?" asked someone.

"When will the moon rise?" asked someone else.

"Early—it is in the first quarter," replied James.

"Come into the house and have tea before you begin again," said the lady of the mansion,

“or would you like it to be brought to you here?”

There was a hasty and very eager conference, and it was decided that an enormous fire should be lighted and that they should all partake of “high-tea” out of doors.

“Preposterous! with the thermometer at eight degrees below freezing!” cried Kathleen and one or two others.

Some of the neighbouring visitors smiled at the idea and went home, after partaking of refreshment in the house.

James, Hubert, Frank, Charlie, Mr. Richards, and the whole of the Rectory party wished to stay very much. Fannie declared they must, Kathleen relented and thought they might. Kate remonstrated a little, alleging, when cross-questioned as to her motives, that Mary was delicate, and that Mrs. Hughes would be very anxious if they were late home.

But Mary appealed to her brother, “Do let me stay, Tom,” she said, “I have never been so happy in my life.”

The Doctor found it impossible to resist

such pleading, especially as he remembered just then how dull she often was at home—besides, he liked skating, and was exactly in the mood for it. Moreover, and this idea settled the matter, it had occurred to his mind that, having a quantity of magnesium wire in his pocket, he might light it and photograph them all as they sat on the bank having high-tea.

So he assented, and soon great logs were heaped up by active servants, a bonfire was lighted, and a substantial and really elegant repast handed round to them as they sat on the snowy bank on either side of the fire.

The scene having been duly photographed, and the moon having risen, they skated happily for some time, finally going home in the sleigh in triumph, and arriving there in the small hours of the morning, after having caused Mrs. Hughes divers apprehensions, and conjured up to her mind vivid recollections of the anxieties endured during the night of the Mynydd-Coch disasters.

And all the time, Dr. Daker had avoided speaking directly to Kate, while she had

begun to feel more than indignant with him. He was too hard and cold and proud she told herself. Yet she knew, in her heart she knew, quite well that he was really good and noble, and that the behaviour which hurt her so much caused himself even more pain.

If he had only given her a chance of talking with him alone, she would have gladly explained to him how it was she had been unable to give him her attention the moment he asked for it the evening before, and how it was, too, she had hurried so out of the sleigh. Ah, those "ifs," what a difference they would often cause!

CHAPTER X.

A CRY FOR HELP.

When will the wind be aweary of blowing
Over the sky ?
When will the clouds be aweary of fleeting ?
When will the heart be aweary of beating ?
And nature die ;
Never, Oh ! never, nothing will die.

* * * * *

Nothing will die,
All things will change
Thro' eternity.

TENNYSON.

A cold uninterrupted rain,
That washed each southern window-pane
And made a river of the road.

LONGFELLOW.

THE snow has gone, and it is a wild, wet night. It is dark, for the black clouds have obscured the moonlight, if indeed the moon has already risen, for it is only between seven and eight p.m. on the last Sunday in the old year. A rapid thaw, followed by heavy rain, has made it anything but pleasant abroad, where each road is a river and every valley a

small lake, where the hedges are all vast and prickly sponges, and the rocks by the way-side and down by the river, slippery traps to catch the unwary and teach practical lessons on the need of caution, and where, in fact, there is "water, water everywhere," and no fear of there being "never a drop to drink."

In the little iron church a considerable congregation has collected, for a special service of a particularly choral nature, followed by an address from a stranger of some renown as a Welsh preacher, is being held.

To Kate's disappointment no English has been uttered except the preacher's text—"They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure : yea all of them shall wax old like a garment ; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed.

... "*But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end.*"

And as the clergyman's eloquence in Welsh is causing the people to listen with the most earnest, tearful attention, Kate leans back in her corner of the seat, near one of the windows, and thinks out a little sermon all to

herself anent the mutability of things below, as suggested by the text and what she sees and hears around.

The Christmas decorations have not been taken down, but having lost their freshness and beauty, they hang limp and faded in their several places. Dr. Daker, sitting at the other end of the same seat—Fannie and Hubert are between him and Kate—has his gravest, and what Mary calls his most “touch-me-not” expression, uppermost in his countenance. He is in a profound study. Mary sits behind with Mr. and Mrs. Hughes and Frank, who has made the choral service an excuse for his presence. Two or three Melynbrehedyn people are there also, rough as the night is, and part of the town church choir has been assisting with the anthem “O, rest in the Lord,” in Welsh. Kate has had to follow mentally in English as well as she could. She is really becoming quite proficient at adapting and improvising words to Welsh music, and thinking many things to the sound of the Welsh language. But she is not meditating very deeply now. The wild

gusts of wind, which seem to rock the little church and almost tear the windows out, so fiercely do they shake them, and the ceaseless beating of the rain upon the iron roof, which is also swelling the Leifi down below, so that its roaring can be heard within the church, is playing wild music to her, such as paralyzes deep thought but conveys a lesson of its own.

"All things change," she thinks, remembering how one short week ago the silent presence of the snow lay all about, and away back in the autumn, how the golden leaves and leaves of russet brown had played about the little church, often floating with a tap against the window-panes, and making a rustling, ever-varying carpet under the trees outside. And how, before that, too, the brilliant sunshine had rested on the bright-green larches and the grass and dancing Leifi down below, while the doves had cooed and little singing-birds had warbled, in mimic rivalry of the music and the voices of the singers within the church, and how the blue sky overhead had perfected every other item of the scene. All had changed, her very self

had changed since first she sat there, listening to the ponderous waves of Welsh enthusiasm, which had swayed the people like so many leaves bent all one way by some fierce gale, until they had wept together at the thought that they too must die. Kate remembered the fear and dread which had fallen on her then, and she almost wondered at it now that she felt so quietly at rest—trusting entirely to the Divine will, knowing it was Love itself—and desiring nothing beyond or beside the fulfilment of that will.

Suddenly she started, for she heard a cry, and that as of one in the most intense distress. The wind had paused for a moment, and it was then she heard it. Now it blew a hurricane that would have drowned many cries. Yet so certain was Kate that someone was in trouble that she whispered her conviction to Fannie, who shook her head but whispered it in her turn to Hubert, by whom the communication was transmitted with earnestness, which showed, he too, had heard something, to the Doctor. He turned and looked at Kate with a faint and rather supercilious

smile. She involuntarily moved her lips as if to beseech him to go and see what was the matter, but he closed his eyes and leaned back.

Stung by this evident refusal to do as she requested, Kate thought bitterly that he imagined it to be another case similar to the owl episode, and she was proportionally indignant.

The wind howled with greater and greater fury outside, then there was a sudden lull, and, again, Kate heard that pitiful cry. She half rose as if to go herself, but Fannie would have her sit down, and a man who was near the door went out.

At that moment the sermon came to an end, and was followed by a long and rather mournful hymn.

As the congregation passed slowly out of the light and warmth into the darkness and pouring rain, they began talking in very excited tones in their own language. Mr. and Mrs. Hughes, Fannie and Hubert, looked at one another, and stood with waterproofs and overcoats half on, as if they were very much impressed.

"What is it?" asked Kate.

"What is it?" repeated Dr. Daker.

"Humph," said Mr. Hughes; "they say that they can hear some one calling for help and evidently in great distress or fear, but it is difficult to tell where the sound comes from."

Kate said nothing, but she looked at Dr. Daker and their eyes met.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly and with extreme earnestness. Then he added to Mr. Hughes, "Of course, we will all go and look about for the person, whoever it is?"

"You will see," said Mr. Hughes, "that everyone will not be so eager to go to the rescue." And then he repeated Dr. Daker's words in Welsh.

The effect was curious. The little group of appalled and inquisitive people began to thin rapidly, though a few remained, talking grandly of how they would recommend different plans to be carried out.

"Well," said Dr. Daker, "someone must take the lead. Where is James?"

"Not here," said his father. "Unfortu-

nately he is down in town. But I will see what I can do."

"Oh, Dr. Daker, don't let my husband go," implored Mrs. Hughes excitedly. "He is no walker, no climber, he will be ill if he hurries. The rain is bad for his bronchitis as it is—"

"My dear Mrs. Hughes, I would not allow him to go for anything. Pray be calm, or we shall have all the good ladies around imploring their husbands not to help us. See, they are already infected," and Dr. Daker drew her attention to a little stout woman, who was throwing herself into the arms of a tall, thin man in the most impassioned and tragic manner.

Mrs. Hughes was as much disconcerted as people are upon first discovering that their doings are feebly imitated by those who bring ridicule upon them. She was silent, while Dr. Daker continued, turning to her husband, "I shall not hear of your going, Mr. Hughes, for a moment. But if you will kindly take the ladies home, Frank and I will do the rest."

"I am afraid," said Frank, with the most delicate shade of regret in his beautiful voice, "that I must not stay, it is a long way to Melynbrehedyn, and I have to be off by train, to see a distant client, at an early hour in the morning."

"But that is nonsense," said Dr. Daker quite sternly. "My good fellow, I cannot do without you to speak for me."

"And the 'distant client' is all moonshine," said his father angrily. "And you know it, Frank. Why this is the very first time you have ever been heard to plead *business* as an excuse."

Frank laughed uneasily. "I never went in for being a Hercules," he said, "and I don't approve of spoiling my boots by plunging down into that river."

Certainly it sounded rather formidable in the darkness below, for they could hear the Leifi and much more beside dashing and roaring tumultuously. But there was another cry for help a little fainter than before.

"Dr. Daker, I will go with you," said

Hubert, putting his thin small hand upon the Doctor's arm.

"You, my child!" he exclaimed, his stern face relaxing into a beautiful smile as he looked down on the boy's pale but determined countenance.

Kate envied Hubert. She would have gone herself gladly, woman as she was, if she could have been of any use, but, besides not knowing the language any more than the Doctor, she knew they would not hear of her going, so she would not waste time by proposing such a thing.

"You must keep close to me, then," said Dr. Daker to Hubert, "and you must say exactly what I tell you in Welsh without any unnecessary words.

"Yes, oh, yes," said Hubert eagerly.

"Tell three men to follow us down to the Leifi, we will separate when we reach it, and tell two to go up the hill above the church, and ask how many are left."

Hubert obeyed, and then it was discovered that the men were pressing each other to go forward but apparently in vain.

Kate said afterwards it was a clear case of

those behind crying "forward" and those in front crying "back."

"They all want to come with you," said Hubert to the Doctor.

"What in the world for? Are they infants?" he cried scornfully.

"They think," said Mr. Hughes gruffly, that there is something supernatural about the cry, and indeed it seems to me rather odd. Listen."

The cry was rapidly repeated more than once, and certainly in a stronger and decidedly different voice to that which they had been hearing.

"Edward Edwards fears it will decoy them down there to their hurt," said Hubert.

"Oh, for the times when Owen Glyndwr's brave followers were impregnable in this very country, at least in the mountains around," said Mr. Hughes bitterly. "They would be ashamed of their descendants."

"Let us go home, Kate," said Mary, in a low voice, placing a trembling hand in hers, as Mr. Hughes began to chide the men for their pusillanimity.

Kate thought Mary was overcome with

dismay at the way in which her hero had withdrawn from the scene, for he had already departed for Melynbrehedyn, not caring even to be left behind by the town-people, who had set off with much alacrity at the idea of the search. But she made no remark as she complied with her request, and Mary was very grateful to her for her silence.

Mr. Hughes remained a little longer, till he had persuaded two or three of the men to go in one direction, while the others went with Dr. Daker and Hubert, then he reluctantly followed the rest of his family.

Down by the Leifi, almost to their boot-tops in water, guided by the cries for help at longer and longer intervals, the little party of would-be rescuers stumbled on, with their one lantern, which only served to light up a woefully small space at a time. Before long, however, they discovered that there were really two voices, and soon they had reached their owners.

A fine, tall, hale old man was supporting another man, younger and more slender than himself, who had fallen into a hole by the

river-side, and was clinging to a large boulder as if for his life. The current of water played about him with no mean force as it rushed between the rocks, and his situation was alarming enough, for the old man could not lift him out.

"But why don't you try to get out yourself?" asked Dr. Daker, comprehending the situation in a moment.

"I cannot; I have hurt my foot most frightfully," groaned the man in very good English.

"Why it is Mr. Roberts," cried Hubert.

"Mr. Roberts, yn wir!" said the men.

"The station-master at Melynbrehedyn," explained Hubert to Dr. Daker, who was already between the boulders by his side.

He did not reply until Mr. Roberts was placed safely on the comparatively dry ground; then he said, "I recognised the voice, but who is this brave old hero?" and he laid his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Don't you remember him? You took his photograph," said Hubert.

"Oh, the old man at Ty-gwyn, I had for-

gotten him," said Dr. Daker. "Ask him how he came there."

He had been to the iron church and had hurried to the rescue, without stopping to hear what the others decided on doing.

"And how did you get here, Mr. Roberts?" asked the Doctor next, as he examined the injured foot.

"I don't know," said the station-master feebly. "Having a substitute to-night to look after my men, I had been preaching at a chapel about a mile further on, if I am where I think I am, but I really rather lost my way."

"I should think you did," said the Doctor, "to get into a hole like that. Why, my good fellow, you have sprained your ankle very severely."

A groan was the only reply.

Matters had reached this crisis when a shrill voice was heard calling "Roland Rolands," and a tremendous splashing and floundering along of some dark creature was to be heard and seen in a gleam of moonlight which had just stolen across the darkness.

The old man gave his head a melancholy shake.

"Is that his name?" asked Dr. Daker.

"Yes," replied Hubert. "He is Roland Rolands senior, and that will be his granddaughter coming in search of him."

"Roland Rolands," called the shrill voice more loudly, and then a young woman, with a man's jacket over her head and shoulders, came up. "Roland Rolands," she said again, in an almost menacing tone, as she laid a somewhat ungentle hand upon his arm.

He feebly uttered one or two monosyllables in Welsh, and was evidently cowed and frightened. It was sad to see the hero look so unheroic.

"Tell her how brave and noble it was of him to go alone in the darkness while we were only talking about it, and say that I am proud to have ever taken his likeness," said Dr. Daker.

Hubert did so, and the woman was evidently a little mollified, but, notwithstanding that, she led her grandfather away with scant ceremony.

Mr. Roberts had to be carried to Pen-y-bont, whence more men conveyed him in a litter to his home, as he persisted in refusing all offers of shelter for the night elsewhere.

"You are a brave youth, Hubert," said Dr. Daker, as they returned to Taliesin Hall after seeing him safely as far as Pen-y-bont. "How was it you were not afraid?"

"I was rather at first," replied the boy honestly, "but then *you* were here, and you looked so strong and good I could not fear to follow you anywhere."

"My dear boy, don't make a hero of *me*," said Dr. Daker, as if that would indeed be absurd.

CHAPTER XI.

MARY AND KATE.

I have no other than a woman's reason;
I think him so, because I think him so.

SHAKESPEARE.

Two or three days passed rapidly, being much taken up by visits to such of the surrounding gentry as the Dakers had met during their previous visit; and everywhere Mary was very happy, for they invariably met Frank, who as invariably continued to pay her marked attentions. Dr. Daker, for his part, disliked so much visiting, especially as he met no one to whom he cared to talk or who attracted him so much as Kate. The latter did not go anywhere with them, and kept sedulously in the background. She knew now, both the happiness and the unhappiness which had alternately filled her mind in relation to the Doctor had taught her, that he was more to her than any other man ever had been or could be, and believing as she

did that she was not by any means so much to him, she concentrated all her energies on disguising her real feelings, and consequently acted and spoke the more coldly the more she felt she really cared for him.

Learned and clever as he was, Dr. Daker could not see through all this, but took every word and act of hers in its most literal interpretation, and was, in return, more bitter and hard with her as he grew more unhappy and dissatisfied with himself.

"What are you reading, Mary?" he inquired abruptly, on the last morning of their stay at Taliesin Hall, as he entered the drawing-room, where Mary was reading on a low chair by the fire and Kate sat sewing by the window.

Outside it was raining heavily.

"One of Tamogen's novels," replied Mary, without looking up.

"It is very unwise," he said hastily, "to read *novels* in the good morning hours!" and he laid a slightly contemptuous emphasis upon the word *novels*. "Give it to me," he added, putting out his hand for the book.

"No, Tom, I shall not," said Mary with unusual spirit. "You know," she added gently, "I am trying to finish it before I go."

"I only want to see if you should read it, child," he said more mildly. "Some of those novels are such trash. I remember picking up one at a railway bookstall—by-the-bye, I believe it was one of Tamogen's, I thought I had seen the name somewhere—and throwing it out of the carriage window as I went home."

He was not looking at Kate, and so did not perceive how the colour was rising to her face.

Mary had no idea that Tamogen was Kate's father, for Kate had purposely refrained from telling her who the author was until she had read the book. It seemed to Tamogen's daughter that it would be pleasant if she could find that this fresh child-nature, with its sweet, girlish instincts, could discover something delicately good and akin to itself in the delineations of society in which her father had delighted.

"Tom," replied Mary quietly, "I don't think you are any judge of a novel. I should go to you if I wanted to know which was the best work on geology, philosophy, or history ; but, as for fiction, I infinitely prefer to be guided by Kate, on whose judgment I can rely. Oh, Kate, don't go."

For the latter was leaving the room, almost trembling with varying emotions.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Montague," said Dr. Daker coldly, for he thought Kate was very much out of temper about almost nothing ; "I was not aware that *you* had recommended the book to my sister."

Kate did not answer—instead she held out her hand for the volume, with an imploring look to Mary.

"No, dear Kate," said Mary, in answer to the mute appeal, "I will not give it you till I have finished it. I like it so much, it is such a pretty story, and I am sure it would do me no more harm than these would," pointing to the hot-house flowers on the table.

"You hear what your sister says," said Kate, turning to Dr. Daker, her eyes still

flashing and the rich colour still mantling in her cheeks.

"I hear," he replied, his honest, calm eyes meeting hers without flinching. "But I am sure you will agree with me that it would not be wise for anyone, especially one so susceptible as Mary, to be surrounded with too many hot-house flowers. They are all very well in their proper place, and so are novels; when one is tired with hard work and all that sort of thing they are useful as recreation and amusement, though I never seem to have required their assistance in that way myself."

"We do not all know what is good for us," said Kate frigidly. "If you had only read more novels, if the society from which you turn so cynically in real life, had been portrayed to you in that form, perhaps you would not have been such a—such a—" she was going to say severe judge of these things, but, fearing that would sound rather too harsh, she stopped abruptly.

"Such a *bear*," the Doctor exclaimed very bitterly. "Thank you, Miss Montague, I shall remember that."

"I have no doubt you will," Kate retorted with equal bitterness; "for you hold the conclusions at which you arrive—with singular penetration into character—as tenaciously as you jump at them hastily."

Dr. Daker bowed, and, as Kate turned again impatiently towards the door, he opened it for her, whereupon she left the room.

"Tom, what have you done?" cried Mary, melting into tears.

But Tom had gone too. She saw him a little later pass the window in his mackintosh, with an umbrella up, as if he were going for a walk in the rain.

Unwilling to follow Kate lest she should seem to make more of the little altercation between her and her brother by ill-advised interference, and hoping that she would soon return to her, Mary resigned herself to her book, and was soon again absorbed in its perusal.

Presently someone entered the room, and feeling sure that it was Kate, Mary said, without looking round—

"Kate dear, I *am* so dreadfully sorry."

"So dreadfully sorry," echoed Frank, in pretended consternation. "What can be the matter, Miss Daker?"

"Oh, Mr. Frank, I did not know it was you!" she said simply, rising as she spoke. "Have you come through all the rain?"

"I believe I have," he said, taking her hand and looking down into her blushing face. "I could not stay away on your last day. I don't know what I shall do when you have gone," and he sighed.

"You will have all your friends left about you," said Mary. "It must be nice to have so many. *I—I have only Tom.*"

"Then you mean to renounce us all as soon as you have left Taliesin?" he inquired gently, still retaining her hand.

"Oh, no, of course I do not mean that, but our place is such a long way from here—it may be *ages*," with a deep sigh hastily suppressed, "before I see any of you again; and it is so dull for me at home—Tom's friends are so old." And she told him artlessly about her difficulties with the vicar and his wife, Dr. Stones and his wife, and

the lawyer and his wife, and how formidable were the dinner and luncheon parties at which she had to preside as hostess. "You don't know what it is, Mr. Frank," she said, "to feel everybody at the table is almost half a century older than yourself, and that you are looked down upon and pitied as a poor little thing who knows nothing—nothing at all."

Of course all this sounded very pitiful in Mary's rather tremulous and wholly timid voice, for she was visited by misgivings all the time about discussing home-trials even with him. And Frank thought it necessary to say many kind and consoling words, and to raise her spirits by trying to give her some conception of the high opinion he had formed of her. Then, when these matters were settled to the satisfaction of them both, he wished to know why she had said she was so "dreadfully sorry" when he entered. Mary explained—

"But I do not know why Kate was so vexed," she said.

"Well, you see, Tamogen happened to be

her father," Frank replied carelessly. "But she has a temper, and no mistake."

The last remark *sotto voce*.

"Tamogen her father!" exclaimed Mary, shrinking a little from him, with quick, instinctive distrust. "She *must* have been so hurt. It was terrible, it was most distressing! How vexed she must have felt with Tom. How little he knew."

"But she should not be so ridiculously sensitive," said Frank in his usual slow way.

"Mr. Frank," said Mary with unexpected dignity, "Kate is my friend, and I love and respect her all the more for what has passed."

"Why?"

"I cannot explain. But, oh, cannot you understand? If I had been Kate's father I should like her to have felt just so. I must tell Tom; he will understand me."

Frank did not like the turn the conversation was taking, it was not pleasant to be told Mary thought someone else could comprehend her feelings better than himself, so he begged her to come to the piano, and they sang duets together, until Kate, hearing them,

delayed her return to the drawing-room, and went to Fannie in the schoolroom instead.

Fannie was trying to complete a little New Year's gift for Mary, which she was to take away with her on the morrow, and she was very glad of Kate's advice as to the right shades of colour for the border. It was a rather gorgeous five-o'clock-tea cloth worked in crewels, and resplendent with peacocks, sunflowers, and two or three more somewhat incongruous elements. As evidence of the donor's friendship it would be highly valuable, having plainly cost much self-denying toil, but, as a specimen of her artistic powers, it was worth nothing at all, or rather it held them up to universal contempt and reprobation, and was, in fact, a standing warning instead of example to all industrious but uncultured fingers.

By-and-bye, Mary being so happy, the singing, music, and Frank forming altogether such a charming, and, for a time, such an absorbingly alluring combination, she forgot all about Kate's trouble, and did not remember it again until they met at the dinner table.

Then she felt very remorseful on that account, as she noticed how pale both her brother and Kate were, and how they avoided speaking to each other more than they could help. But neither of them happened to sit near her, and of course she could not explain matters across the table, and then, afterwards, Frank was so fascinating, and he and she had so much to say to one another, that somehow she forgot all about it again. Perhaps she could scarcely help that, being, as her brother had said, so susceptible to passing influences, and feeling, as she did, that she was hovering on the brink of the most important crisis of her life. She and Frank sat looking at the same album half the evening, and played and sang together the other half, and, just before they parted for the night, Frank contrived to tell Mary of his love for her, and ascertained, in return, with much satisfaction, the nature of her feeling towards him, which latter was not difficult, seeing Mary was such a transparent simple-hearted little creature.

She was almost bewildered with happiness

as she sought her room that night, and looked very different from the shy and timid girl who had impressed Kate with the idea that she must be protected and taken care of on that evening they had first seen each other.

But she was so young, so ignorant of the harsher side of life, and so buoyed up by the surprise of this new, strange happiness, that for once, her timidity and shyness had retired into the background.

Letting down her hair over her pretty pink dressing cape, beating it playfully with her little ivory-backed brush, hiding her blushing face with it one moment and tossing it out of her eyes the next, laughing with childish delight, because it was so beautiful and would curl and twist about her fingers and fall far below her waist in waving, curling masses, murmuring the whole time little disconnected speeches to the effect that it was "all his," such was Mary Daker on the last night of her Christmas visit to Taliesin Hall.

Suddenly she became more thoughtful, one of the candles had burnt low and sunk down

into its socket plunging the room into semi-darkness, which seemed to cast the slightest of slight shadows across her happy soul. She felt a great longing to confide in someone, and, instinctively her thoughts turned to Kate, who was older than Fannie, and moreover possessed the advantage of not being Frank's sister; and, besides, Mary thought more of her opinion than that of anyone but Tom. Thinking of them both together, she remembered that she had not explained matters between them, and that therefore, for that reason, too, she must go to Kate.

So she tripped across the landing and knocked lightly at her door.

Kate's voice, in a rather low and despondent key, bade her enter, and Mary found her sitting by the fire—Mrs. Hughes was generous in the matter of fires—looking too spiritless to do anything but gaze into the glowing bed of coals; an occupation which has sometimes anything but an enlivening tendency.

“Oh, you dear, darling Kate,” cried Mary, embracing her, and actually, in her new joy,

forgetting the cause of the other's gloom, "you have always been so good and kind to me; I want to tell you all about it."

And Kate, looking down at the sweet, blushing face, and knowing "all about it" without being told, put her arm round the younger girl and drew her tenderly down beside her.

"But you do not look half glad, Kate," said Mary suddenly, when she had ended her timid confession. "I think you might be a little glad for me Kate," rather plaintively, "you know I have no mother."

Kate was inexpressibly touched. "Perhaps it is because I have none either," she said, smoothing Mary's pretty tangled hair out of her eyes, "that I feel so to care for you that I don't, don't think anyone I know is good enough for my darling."

"Oh, Kate, don't you think *he* is?"

"I don't indeed," she said gravely.

"Then I am sorry I told you anything about it," said Mary, rising tremulously, "if you don't like him and are prejudiced against him."

"Hush, darling, I am not prejudiced, and I did not say I did not like him," said Kate gently, "only I love you so very dearly."

"But not so much as he, Kate," said Mary, kneeling down by Kate and tossing her pretty hair back that she might look up appealingly at her. "I never thought anyone could, could love another as he loves me."

Kate did not answer, but she caressed Mary silently, as if she would fain satisfy her with affection instead of assent.

"Kate," said Mary earnestly, "I think he is the best, most noble, most unselfish, and altogether most beautiful and honourable of men."

"Yes, dear, I dare say you think so," said Kate, "but this is a matter about which you ought to be sure."

"I am quite sure he is what I think him," replied Mary confidently, "I have studied his character so well. Oh, Kate, you don't know," she continued; "how I have thought of nothing else ever since I first made his acquaintance. Tom could tell you how

miserable I was at home until it was arranged for us to come here again, and I know *he* (she avoided Frank's name) was equally miserable without me."

Kate sighed, being much distressed and uncertain how to act.

"Now, Kate, you are not to sigh," said Mary lightly, pretending to waft Kate's sigh away with a playful puff of breath. "You are just to be very glad for me, because, because I have obtained all my heart's desire."

"Is that *all* your heart's desire, darling?" said Kate.

"*All*," replied Mary; then she added with sudden earnestness, "Kate, it's no use objecting, I cannot help loving him and thinking him all that is beautiful, and if everybody in the world were to try and make me change my mind and give him up they could not do it—they would have to kill me first."

"Hush, dearie, do not say such things. How did you live before you knew Mr. Frank, the world is the same as it was then."

no harder and no worse than it was before."

"But you don't know what it is."

"Don't I?" said Kate bitterly.

"I beg your pardon," said Mary, "but I know if you had ever loved anyone so beautiful and, and all that, as, as he is, you, you would understand how impossible it would be to think less of him than I do. If people come between us and separate us now, I should die, Kate, they would just kill me."

"I once felt like that," said Kate sympathisingly. "Indeed I quite understand you, Mary dear, but I know better now; people do not die of grief in these days; the world still goes on and they have each to carry their own cross if they are wise and brave, or spurn it and dash along anyhow if they are weak and contemptible."

"Oh, but Kate," said Mary, "I am not like you. I could not comfort myself with brave and noble thoughts—I am a poor, weak 'little thing,' I should soon die out of the way."

As Kate regarded Mary with much earnest-

ness and some anxiety, she believed every word she had just said, for Mary was so fragile and delicate that, even at the best, she seemed to have but slight hold upon this mortal life. A great trouble of any sort, direct opposition to her will in a matter upon which her heart was fixed, even anxiety and suspense would, she felt certain, be fatal to her health. And yet she could not help sighing as she thought of the troubles and difficulties she might have to encounter if she ever became the wife of one so indolent and essentially selfish as was Frank.

"What does your brother say?" she asked.

"Oh, he does not know yet," answered Mary; "no one knows but you," rather wistfully.

"And I must have seemed most unsympathising," said Kate tenderly. "But dear Mary, it is such a very important matter."

"As if I did not know that, you dear old wisdom," cried Mary gaily, "and, and he—I can't call him Frank yet—will speak to Tom to-night if he has a favourable opportunity, but if not he will write."

“And you think your brother will consent?”

“Of course he will,” returned Mary lightly ; “there is nothing to prevent him. Oh, Kate, away with all those gloomy fancies ! And now I think of it, I must tell you how sorry I am Tom was so rude, but he did not know any more than myself that Tamogen was your father. I’m dreadfully sorry, but he did not know, and I dare say he scarcely looked into the volume he treated so disrespectfully ; as I always tell him, for such a clever man, he is singularly obtuse and dull about some things. Still I know you must have been very much hurt.”

“I was rather,” said Kate, colouring again, at the recollection of it all, “but never mind that, darling, to-night,” and she hastened to say all the kind, sympathising words she could truthfully utter about Mary’s attachment. Only, when the girl was leaving her, she said rather falteringly, “You will tell your brother, Mary, about Tamogen being my father, perhaps it will explain more than one little difference we have been so unfortunate as to have.”

"Oh, yes, of course," said Mary, with the best intentions in the world.

As a child, I used to be terribly distressed with the story of Pharaoh's chief butler's neglect of the imprisoned Joseph's request that he would remember him when he was restored to the king's favour. And the recollection adds to the pain which I feel now upon reflecting how often requests of heart-rending importance to some people are heedlessly consigned to oblivion by others, because they, being self-absorbed—and perhaps not wrongly so—at the time, fail to realise the matter and look at it from the other's point of view.

The next day, being rather afraid, in spite of her confidence about it the night before, and altogether in a state of uncertainty and suspense as to how her brother would act about her and Frank, Mary timidly avoided being alone with the Doctor, and it was not until they were seated in the train on their way home that she told him what would have materially altered his very formal leave-taking with Kate.

Dr. Daker was annoyed that he had not known sooner that Kate was Tamogen's daughter, and he was much perturbed about what he had said in her presence, and no longer wondered that she had been so angry and indignant; but he endeavoured to console himself by the reflection that he could write to her to apologise amply for it all.

Unfortunately, however, he was not *au fait* at letter-writing, which accomplishment is by no means a necessary accompaniment of scientific erudition, and the letter that, after much anxious deliberation, was at length achieved was a model of precise stiffness, which Kate read with an aching heart, and which was little better than no apology at all. For it showed her that he knew the cause of her distress and vexation, and yet thought that a few apologetic words were quite sufficient to atone for it. Evidently, she concluded after weighing each sentence of that icy document, she was no more to him than the merest acquaintance. And she was glad that she had been so cold to him just at the last, and that his letter needed no reply,

being so expressed that no response appeared necessary, or, indeed, to be desired.

Thus, what might have led to a friendly and interesting correspondence between two most congenial minds, languished and died, to their mutual disappointment, at its very commencement, because the Doctor, like many another clever man, was accustomed to stifle the suggestions of his own good heart and keep it entirely out of sight, behind a chilly barrier of formal words, and more especially so when he was writing instead of speaking.

As for Mary's affair, her brother being naturally most unwilling to entrust her happiness to a man of Frank Hughes' calibre, yet thinking highly of his family, and particularly of his father, was some time before he would give his consent to the engagement, and only when he found that Mary's health was suffering not a little from the continued suspense did he begin to yield slowly and with extreme reluctance.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK.

Now was the winter gone, and the snow; and robin the red-
breast,
Boasted on bush and tree it was he, it was he, and no other,
That had covered with leaves the Babes in the Wood, and
blithely
All the birds sang with him, and little cared for his boasting.

* * * * *

Thus came the lovely spring with a rush of blossoms and music,
Flooding the earth with flowers, and the air with melodies vernal.
LONGFELLOW.

STEADY, unswerving hard work makes time fly as we all know. Jack could scarcely believe Easter and the Easter vacation, the bright days of spring, and the time for him to go on his long contemplated Welsh tour had at length arrived. He was a very thorough, whole-hearted young fellow, though he did think himself over head and ears in love with a certain dark-eyed Welsh lassie away among the hills and mountains of wild Wales, and having spent as few minutes as

possible in useless longings for the time to come, he had plunged into hard work with very earnest purpose and with the most gratifying results in every way but in the matter of his own health. For he had knocked himself up, or rather down, with such strenuous toil, and was feeling jaded and altogether out of sorts.

He wanted a holiday very much. He could scarcely endure the sight of his familiar books, and felt an intense disgust for all his surroundings, the shabby furniture and threadbare carpets, even the dark back stairs had grown positively unendurable. In a word, Jack panted for fresh air and mountain-climbing, and, if it must be owned, also for some more congenial home-society than the brief visits, or rather intrusions, of his landlady upon his peace of mind, for she had grown melancholy and rather fractious about the increased evidences of wear and tear which her furniture displayed in the lighter days of spring.

After all, Jack felt too fagged to set off on a walking tour. To Wales he would go;

but he determined just at the last to go to Aberystwith first, and stay there until he had arranged his plans. In his listless, tired-out mood he imagined it would do him good to sit idly on the beach throwing pebbles into the sea, and think of "nothing particular"—if Fannie Hughes might come under that category. With her mother he was in a state of suppressed wrath, for, it having been Fannie's birthday, he had thought he might presume to send her some exquisite flowers, for which he had given a rather fabulous price; and he had been rewarded by a short note from Mrs. Hughes, thanking him urbanely for his beautiful present to *herself*, and saying not a word of any possible visit he might be thinking of making in their neighbourhood.

"I shall go to see them notwithstanding that," he exclaimed, as the train bore him slowly along the Cambrian line towards Aberystwith. And he mentally apostrophised Mrs. Hughes by the name (in the singular number) of those quadrupeds popularly supposed to be first cousins to the

species immortalized (*pro tem.*) by the gentle Cowper's favouritism. But then Jack was not well, and so we must excuse a little temporary unamiability, and he thought Mrs. Hughes might have suspected how glad he would be to run over to see them upon the smallest pretext whatsoever. If she had given him but the slightest shadow of an excuse for going he would have seized it with avidity, and so magnified and altogether altered it that to everybody but himself it would have been unrecognisable. But the lady had been too wary. If he went at all, he must make a bold stroke and go over to call upon them without any encouragement. They were very hospitable; he was sure they would receive him kindly.

Meanwhile, he was on his way to Aberystwith, and possibly fate might be propitious and send the Taliesin Hall party that way in the beautiful spring weather. In any case he would be near Mynydd-Coch, and Mynydd-Coch had once been very kind to him in that respect. It is to be feared Jack was so reckless as to long for another Mynydd-Coch

adventure similar to the last, if—and the proviso was an important one—he could only share it with the same congenial companion.

Arrived at Aberystwith and comfortably located at an hotel, three days passed slowly by, and Jack grew tired of casting pebbles into the sea, and gazing vaguely at the few visitors who, at that early season, frequented the place. So on the fourth morning, feeling restless, and imagining the sea-air did not suit his health, he paid his hotel bill and strolled away inland. On and on he went for miles, in a reckless “don’t care” manner, singularly touching in one so earnest and resolved as Jack Harvey had always shown himself to be.

It was one of those warm, bright spring days which, coming after the cold and darkness of winter, are so enervating and yet hope-inspiring in their tendency. There was blue sky overhead, and the spring sunshine was very pleasant, the birds chirped and warbled merrily on every side, but Jack’s languor and melancholy steadily increased.

He was very thirsty, and often stopped to drink—do not be alarmed for valiant Jack—he only drank from the numerous bubbling springs and little water-courses by the roadside, and sometimes he bathed his aching head and wished that his doing so would give it more permanent relief. For Jack was really ill, and soon, not only his head but every bone in his possession was aching wretchedly. He was glad, when the evening began to close in, to find a little wayside inn of tolerably respectable appearance, kept by an old Welsh-woman, with the assistance of a large-limbed, heavy-looking son, and two or three daughters bearing a strong family-resemblance to her and to their brother.

Jack ordered tea, and, as the mistress of the house seemed to be unusually solicitous that he should partake of fried ham and eggs likewise, he nodded his assent. But, when he was summoned to the table, he discovered that it was impossible to eat, and he found much fault (silently) with the tea, which was certainly a very doubtful compound. He went to bed early, in a little old

oak chamber, with sloping oaken beams instead of a ceiling, and tiny, diamond-pattern window-panes, and tossed about all night, a prey to hideous and distracting illusions, in the form of nightmare-like dreams, in which some fearful concatenation of circumstances was nearly always threatening him with the most appalling tragedies.

In the morning he awoke to the very present fact that the whole household was consulting in Welsh around him, in loud whispers which irritated him immensely. No one likes being disturbed in that way, and Jack ordered them wildly to "get out." When the room was cleared of all but the stalwart son of the house, who seated himself grimly by the bedside as if he never meant to go away, and whom Jack had to give up attempting to exclude for the simple reason that he would not stir, the invalid sank again into a semi-comatose state, out of which the advent of some very greasy compound, weakly imagined by the youth's mother to be water-gruel, very much disturbed and altogether discomforted him.

In the course of the day the nearest doctor, who lived five miles off, came and looked at Jack, but he, feeling particularly bad just then, scarcely looked at him in return. Only he heard him give someone directions as to what he was to take and how he was to be nursed, which was all so much labour lost, for beyond abundant replies, in both Welsh and English, from the mother, son, and daughters, no notice was taken of these most excellent instructions. It was evident from the way in which the doctor was spoken of—after he had been smiled and curtsied out of the house—by the natives amongst whom poor Jack was stranded, that they had small faith in his powers of healing. Presently they began to talk of going to fetch some old woman who had saved such and such a man's life after all the medical men in the neighbourhood had given him up—a tradition very much distorted from the actual fact by the vivid Welsh imagination through which it had careered with immense *éclat* for many years. But the old woman was very, very ancient, and eventually, and most hap-

pily for Jack, it was discovered that she was too infirm to come, so his life was saved from the peril of being tampered with by unskilled, untutored ignorance.

Two days passed; the fever increased in intensity, and Jack was all but overpowered. It was a low fever the doctor said, but if he had known how his patient was mentally scaling impossible mountains—often accompanied by Fannie—all the time, he might have thought it was high enough. However, on the third day it abated, and Jack came to himself, to find that self very much reduced in strength and extremely puzzled about dates, situations, and even people. For, as he lay in bed, he could see the stalwart youth wearing his clothes, doubtless as more adapted to such refined employment as sick nursing, and he often observed him lightly fingering his purse, which had been so well-filled only a few days before, and which now—perhaps from sympathy—looked almost as attenuated as its owner. At first Jack felt rather inclined to doubt his own identity; he had such profound scorn for the weak thing sup-

posed to be himself, and such keen interest in the man who was using his property with all the familiarity and apparent *sang froid* of ownership. He was too weak to ask questions, and he lay puzzling over the matter until the doctor came in to see him.

"There is marked improvement here," said the latter, an elderly, grave-looking man, and turning to the youth he dispatched him for some beef-tea.

"Now is my time," thought Jack, making an immense effort. "Who—who am I?" he faltered.

"The poor fellow is wandering," thought the doctor, but he answered gravely enough, "You are in good hands. We shall soon have you well again."

Jack looked at him very earnestly. What a pity that it was such an exertion to speak!

The surgeon went to the table and returned with some port wine in a cup, which he held to Jack's lips. The patient drank, and then, finding a voice, said in low tones—

"Not good at all."

"What, is not this good?" queried the doctor cheerily.

"How stupid he is!" Jack thought peevishly. Aloud he said, "I mean 'the hands.' You spoke of them being so good."

"Well, are they not? Do they not treat you well?"

"That fellow is wearing my clothes, and I can't do anything to help myself," said Jack miserably.

"What a shame!" said the man of medicine, contemplating his patient with much thoughtfulness, and a few remaining doubts as to whether his words were to be entirely relied upon.

However, Jack succeeded in convincing him that he spoke with reason, but he begged him not to stir in the matter while he was so weak, lest the family should be tempted to take some revenge upon him when he was again left alone among them.

"Oh, no fear of their doing that—though of course I will say nothing since you wish it—but they are very decent people in their way," returned the other, "and if that way

includes a little pilfering and a more than little want of strict veracity on their part, the best plan for us is to get out of it as soon as we can."

"Quite right," said poor Jack with a sigh, remembering how helpless he was.

But now the beef-tea, or what was to be considered as such, appeared in the not too cleanly hands of Jack's landlady, and while he tried to swallow a little the doctor blandly remarked that the patient's friends ought to be communicated with.

"We must send for one of his relations, Mrs. Jones," he said cheerfully. "The trouble ought not to be all laid upon you."

"Oh, no trouble, no trouble at all," she said smiling, but with evident anxiety. "The young gentleman makes no cooking; he eats nothing, nothing at all, Dr. Jenkins."

"But you will not have that tale to tell long," replied Dr. Jenkins; then, turning to Jack, he added, "I have already taken the liberty of searching your things—as these good, ahem, these worthy people" (seeing the landlady's eyes fixed upon him) "cannot

read English very well—and it was necessary in case anything went wrong, and I imagine you are not literary, for I found nothing at all likely to enlighten me but a photograph, and though that is a very charming one, and the young lady is presumably a country-woman of my own” (the likeness was Fannie’s, who was represented in Welsh costume, which became her admirably), “I scarcely felt justified in having it printed and copies circulated throughout the Principality, whereby she might be found, and with her someone who could share my responsibility.”

“Not she,” murmured Jack with difficulty, for he had exhausted himself without much benefit in attempting the beef-tea. “Send for Cousin Kate—I mean Miss Montague—she’s the only relation I have in England.”

“And her address?”

Jack gave it, and, promising to telegraph for her at once, the doctor took his leave.

CHAPTER XIII.

SICK-NURSING.

For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.
But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea,
And only the sorrow of others
Throws its shadow over me.

LONGFELLOW.

EVERYONE knows how after suspicions, secretly cherished for some time, have once been communicated to another, they assume a more tangible shape and something of that reality which before was lacking.

After the medical man had gone, Jack, being exceedingly weak, and for the first time in his life, distressingly nervous, began to fancy the whole family in whose house he was were in league against him. When Mrs. Jones appeared again at his bedside with some more of the liquid supposed to be beef-

tea, he had grown so distrustful that he would not take it from her hands. And before long he had a serious relapse, and was as ill or more so than he had ever been.

Kate only received his doctor's message about midnight, owing to the time occupied in conveying it to and from the telegraph office at each end of its journey. She was of course very sorry to hear that Jack was so ill, and with the helpfulness which was almost instinctive with her, she wanted to go to his aid at once, night though it was. However, it was necessary to wait for a train, so her friends would have her take a little rest, though she found it impossible to sleep, before starting. Then, with a small portmanteau for herself, and a basket packed with all sorts of good things for the invalid—Mrs. Hughes, with her usual generosity, having given her *carte blanche* to take whatever she fancied might be useful, Edward Edwards drove her in the early morning to meet the first train from Melynbrehedyn to Craig-y-nant. The latter place, where the doctor who was attending Jack resided, was a large village, and it

contained the nearest railway station to Cwm-Carig, where Jack was laid up.

Kate went to Dr. Jenkins' house first of all, and found him at home, for which she was very thankful, as she had feared he might have gone out, perhaps for some distance. He was considerably surprised at her promptitude.

"My patient will do well now," he said, surveying her with much satisfaction.

"How can I get to Cwm-Careg," asked Kate, after having been reassured about Jack's condition.

"I would take you there myself, but unfortunately I have been sent for from another direction," replied Dr. Jenkins. "Indeed," he added, "I fear it will be impossible for me to see your cousin to-day. He is five miles away, I am very busy, and as he was so much better yesterday, I think I can safely leave him to you," and he gave her a few simple directions as to what Jack was to take, &c.

"But how can I reach him?" asked Kate again. "I inquired for a cab or vehicle of

some description at the station, but there seemed to be nothing at all."

"It is very awkward," said Dr. Jenkins. However, he sent out to inquire, and eventually the largest innkeeper in the place was found in possession of a dogcart, a horse and a man who could drive; three acquisitions which no one else seemed to have altogether. So Kate was driven to Cwm-Careg by an old man, who discoursed fluently about the superiority of his beloved Cymru all the way, while she scarcely heeded him, as she gazed on the beautiful scenery on every side, lighted up by sunshine and enlivened by the sweet country sounds, and thought of poor Jack, and wondered how she would find him. It seemed to her to be so touching that the time to which he had looked forward with such glad anticipations should find him lying seriously ill among strangers.

"Ah, we none of us know what is in store for us," she thought; "but there is this consolation for me, I am like he of whom the shepherd-boy sang in 'Pilgrim's Progress'—

He that is down need fear no fall;

I imagine I can never be more desolate than I am now." For those last three or four months had been anything but a cheerful time with Kate. Having learnt gradually, and not without reason to care so much for Dr. Daker, and that following so soon and so soothingly after the fall of her first idealized estimation of Frank, she had found it difficult to get over her disappointment about him.

And the matter had to be borne in absolute silence, as woman's troubles mostly have.

Bravely and cheerfully had Kate fulfilled all her duties at Taliesin Hall, until she was more beloved than ever by the whole family. Mrs. Hughes had been very ill with rheumatism, which trying affliction perhaps accounted a little for her curt letter to Jack, and Kate, she said, had behaved like a daughter to her all the time. Indeed, Mr. Hughes and she often remarked that they did not know what they should have done without her. She was invariably thoughtful, cheerful and unselfish, three valuable qualities which are not always found united—and they little suspected that she had her own secret, incommunicable

trouble. Perhaps Kate might have been able to think less of it all, if it had not been that when she turned her thoughts, as she was continually turning them more and more, to a better, higher source of comfort than any that this world can bestow, it was there something Dr. Daker had either said or hinted invariably met her, and she realised afresh how noble was the soul of the man who had, she was thoroughly convinced, such a poor opinion of herself. It was so different to the case of Frank, him she had learnt to pity, look down upon, almost to despise, and therefore her love for him had soon been cured. But the more she thought of Dr. Daker, the more she came to appreciate his different qualities and to deplore the estrangement which had crept up and choked their friendship.

When they had reached the pretty village of Cwm-Careg, nestling among rocks at the entrance to a lovely little cwm, and the tiny inn, Kate was dismayed to find the whole family of Jones' in a state of no little excitement. The old lady almost pulled her into

the house, so eager was she to secure her and with her someone to share the responsibility which it had begun to dawn upon her would be considerable.

"Yn wir," she cried, throwing her apron over her head, and weeping in the most melancholy manner, "he will die, he will die, the poor young gentleman!"

"Is he so much worse?" asked Kate.

"Worse? He is going to die."

"But Dr. Jenkins said he was much better," said Kate hurriedly.

"So he was; quite sensible yesterday, when the doctor was here, but, after he had gone, he became very cross and would have no more beef-tea. He is much worse now, and he do talk strange," replied Mrs. Jones.

The fact was that Jack was delirious and was talking all sorts of nonsense about climbing mountains, sinking in bogs, going to call at Taliesin Hall whether they liked it or not, mingled with pitiful complaints that no one would come to look after him.

When Kate placed her cool hand on his hot brow, he cried, "They have left me here

to die," in the words of the captive knight, and he pushed it impatiently away.

"*I have come, Jack,*" she said, as cheerfully as she could through her tears, for she was immensely distressed to find him in such a plight.

But he turned away from her, muttering, "Not you—send for my Cousin Kate, she's the only relation I have here."

It was plain he did not know her. Kate stole away and sent her driver back to tell Dr. Jenkins how much worse his patient was, and then, returning, she established herself as head nurse in the sick room.

For three days her cousin hovered between life and death, and on the fourth he was unconscious, and often looked so death-like that Kate felt convinced he had not many hours to live. The doctor had not been all day though she had sent more than one messenger for him, and she watched the evening fading into night with a sinking heart.

Two or three hours later she became unable to stay in the sick room any longer, for she had not slept for three nights, and the strain upon her nerves was almost too great.

“Go out into the open air a bit, miss,” said Mrs. Owen, the trained nurse Mr. and Mrs. Hughes had sent to Kate’s assistance, “it will do you more good than anything.”

So Kate went out into the beautiful moonlight night, where the fresh air speedily revived her.

Thinking she would try to see if Dr. Jenkins were coming she walked a little way on the Craig-y-nant road, pausing every now and then to listen if she could distinguish the sound of his gig-wheels.

The moon shone like burnished silver, the stars were most brilliant, even the black rocks and the silent hills looked more beautiful than ever.

The influence of “the calm, majestic presence of the night” soothed and refreshed Kate inexpressibly.

She had been learning lately to rest from the troubles and agitations which, during the last year, had so frequently visited her, to lay them all aside as it were, and to throw the whole earnestness of her nature into zeal for the good of her fellow-creatures. And

though, for a time, the comparative quietude and resignation this course of action had engendered had been deeply stirred by intense sympathy for the youth, for whom she had learnt to feel an almost sisterly attachment she felt it, now, returning to her.

In the midst of the anxiety and suspense which had sent her out of doors that she might in some measure compose herself and regain serenity and strength for the duties of the sick room, there had come a great calm. Not the calm of despair, nor the calm of well-founded hope that those things which seemed so desirable should be granted, but the calm of perfect acquiescence in His will, Who, Lord of that glorious night, could not fail to do all well.

Kate felt so full of peace, and so elevated above the struggles, griefs and sorrows of this world, that for a little while her thoughts entirely left her present surroundings and the fellow-creatures in whom she was so deeply interested—they stretched out to the Infinite, they became merged in the Divine.

But this state of things could not last long

in one so practical as she was. Turning earthwards, her mind met, as it usually did at such times, with the highest type of mind she had ever known.

"I suppose this feeling, rather this consciousness, is the secret of Dr. Daker's strength, and is what is making him the great man he is and will be," thought Kate, as she walked on more quickly.

Now and again she fancied she saw something coming towards her, and, at last, feeling certain it was Dr. Jenkins, though why he should be alone and on foot she did not know, she hurried forward as fast as she was able. Then she noticed, with much disappointment, that the figure was too broad and altogether unlike that of the worthy surgeon. She turned aside, suddenly aware that the light, bright as it was, which had almost made her feel as if it were day, was that of the moon, and that she was alone, on a lonely road at a very late hour indeed. So she stood by a gate in the shade of an old yew tree, hoping not to be perceived.

The man walked past her without appearing to take any notice, and then she heard

him stop and retrace his steps, upon which in no little trepidation, she turned round to confront him.

“Miss Montague!” cried Dr. Daker.

“Dr. Daker!” she exclaimed in equal astonishment.

“What are you doing here?”

“How came *you* here?”

“Mary and I have come on a visit to Taliesin Hall—but I did so want to know how your cousin is getting on,” he said almost pleadingly.

“Come with me,” cried Kate, seizing his hand, and forgetting everything else in her concern for Jack. “He is dying, and I was weary of waiting for the doctor. He has not been all day. I thought I would come and meet him. I know it was foolish, but I was no use in the room, I was so dizzy from want of sleep and more fresh air.”

She was hurrying back as she spoke. Dr. Daker drew her arm gently but very firmly within his own.

He said nothing, however, until he had ascended the stairs at the inn and entered Jack’s bedroom.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNDER THE HAWTHORN TREE.

A king of men,
Who still before his strong eyes day and night
Saw power, like a star, shine on the hills,
And set his face to gain it. Luxury
Held him, nor sensual ease, who was too great
For silken fetters, a strong soul and hand
Bent to a higher end than theirs, and touched
To finer issues ; a fair beacon set
Upon a lordly hill above the marsh
Of common life, dull mists and wandering fires
And poisonous exhalations, but laid bare
To the beating of the whirlwind.

ST. CHRISTOPHER.

WHEN Jack was slowly but surely recovering his strength—for Dr. Daker's prompt remedies had been the means of saving his life when it was at its lowest ebb—he never tired of hearing Kate and the Doctor converse, and he especially liked to hear them talk of their Welsh friends. Too weak to be able to speak much himself, he would lie contentedly on his couch as soon as he was well enough to be placed there, listening to them, and though

they sometimes uttered thoughts and feelings a little beyond his growth and comprehension, that only seemed to lend the sense of incompleteness to it all which has been said to be to some minds all that is wanted to express entirely the idea of what is truly great.

Jack took an extraordinary interest in Mary Daker's engagement, and was continually extolling Frank to the Doctor, who rarely mentioned him himself. It was impossible to read Dr. Daker's face when his future brother-in-law was discussed. Only once when Jack said carelessly, "I used to think he cared for you, Kate," he turned and looked searchingly at her.

"Did you?" she rejoined lightly, and then adroitly turned the conversation.

Mary Daker and Frank had been engaged a couple of months or so, and the former had kept Kate well-informed about the whole affair, for she wrote long letters to her dearest friend in which Frank was necessarily a very prominent topic. Kate knew how "Tom's" consent had been wrung from him by the very power of weakness—that of being too

weak to bear refusal—and she knew that he earnestly hoped the engagement would be of sufficient length to prove Frank's constancy, and to allow Mary ample opportunities of becoming thoroughly acquainted with him. She did not wonder that Dr. Daker avoided the whole subject, and that he frequently looked anxious when Mary was being discussed.

He had been a great friend to the cousins in their hour of need, and had devoted himself to Jack with exceeding kindness.

Ostensibly lodging at another village inn about two miles away, he always seemed to be with his patient—for Dr. Jenkins relinquished the care of Jack to him—whenever he was needed, sitting up with him whole nights while he was at the worst, and looking after him and Kate too with almost fatherly forethought.

Kate had little imagined the somewhat absorbed, preoccupied man of science had such a power of adapting himself to circumstances and to the needs and necessities of others as he evinced. In the sick room he was gentle-

ness itself, and when, in Jack's convalescence, the latter was peevish and irritable at times, the Doctor was so tenderly cheerful, so sympathising and yet so droll, that it was impossible to resist his pleasant influence. To Kate he was kindness and consideration personified; they never quarrelled now; all old misunderstandings were tacitly put on one side, and they were brought by their common anxiety to the easy intimacy of comparatively old friends.

One warm sunshiny afternoon in May, Jack, who was then able to walk a short distance, lay on a rug under a hawthorn tree covered with beautiful white bloom, about a hundred yards from the inn. Kate sat on a low chair by his side, with some books and work on a little table close by. Before them lay the pretty cwm, with a broad stream of water running through it and twisting round about many a rugged rock and old tree stump, and here and there, a rustic cottage or low farm house was to be seen, with its smoke curling up and showing distinctly against the still bare and bleak looking hill-

sides. Beyond the hills were mountains, Mynydd-Coch towering above them all, much to Jack's silent satisfaction as he regarded it above the broad bowl of his pipe. Kate had been remonstrating with him for smoking while he was still so weak, but he declared it would help to drive away all infection, so she said no more against it.

Dr. Daker had not been to see them that day, and they supposed he had gone on one of his numerous exploring expeditions in the neighbourhood; for now Jack was so much better the Doctor did not find it necessary to be quite so much with him.

Kate had been reading aloud, but she had laid her book down at last in despair of ever securing Jack's attention; his thoughts were so evidently far away. Now she was sewing a little frock for a village child whom she had discovered to be particularly destitute, and she looked very happy and contented as her busy fingers flew in and out of the soft dark blue material.

"Kate," said Jack at last, with sudden curiosity, "hadn't you a letter this morning?"

"I believe I had," she replied, pretending to be a little doubtful. "Let me see, or was it yesterday morning?"

"Now, Kate, you know as well as I that it was to-day. It was a little square envelope; I met Mrs. Jones with it in her hand."

"I never knew a nurse so tyrannized over by her patient," laughed Kate. "I may not even receive a letter without being subjected to a cross-examination!"

"From whom was it?" persisted Jack.

"From Fannie," said Kate, with a smile. "From whom else should it be?"

"Well, it might have been from Miss Daker, or Miss Jones—who would have thought that little demure creature could spin such yarns as she does to you?—or Mrs. Hughes, or anyone else equally uninteresting to myself."

"Then I suppose you wish me to understand that Fannie is not uninteresting to you."

"Of course she is not. She's the dearest girl—I say, Kate, I should rather like to have a little talk with you."

"Very well."

Kate suppressed another smile, for were they not talking already, all by themselves there, where the nearest fellow-creature was not within sight or hearing?

Jack cropped the heads off some daisies, and tried unsuccessfully to catch two or three flies which were buzzing about his head before he spoke again.

"Well, I may as well tell you all about it," he began at last. "I think I ought, because you are such a—one in a thousand, Kate. You are like a mother, sister, and friend all combined; you—"

"Oh, stop!" said Kate, laughing. "If you set me up so high I fear I shall have the further to fall some day when you become disenchanted."

"As if I ever should," said Jack stoutly. "Do I ever change? At least," and he coloured very much, "though I may seem to change, I have never thought you anything but the dearest and best of women."

"My dear Jack, I shall find it necessary to go in the house if you eulogise me to such an extent; in fact, I shall be positively afraid

of your ever seeing me again if you estimate me so extravagantly, because I know what I am, a very ordinary mortal."

"Well, but Kate, listen," said Jack, "and I will try to explain what I mean."

"Nay, then I must go," said Kate, rising.

"Sit down," said Jack earnestly, "and I will call you anything you please, utterly regardless of truth."

"Do not mention me at all then."

"Very well. Only I want you clearly to understand that I never thought more highly of you than I do now. But you know"—and Jack spoke hurriedly, with averted face—"you must have seen that I could not help rather liking Fannie. She is just my style of girl, lively, sensible, and natural—not a bit affected—pretty, good-tempered, and altogether charming. Don't you think so?"

"I like her very much," replied Kate, "and I think she is improving so rapidly that she may turn out quite a fine character."

"And, now," said Jack, almost breathlessly, as if that settled the matter, "do

you think I should have any chance of—of winning her?”

Kate hesitated.

“I think if you are wise, Jack,” she said at last, “you will leave all that at present.”

Jack made a wry face. He would have liked it all to be settled there and then.

“You are both young,” said Kate, looking down on him as if she were at least fifty, “and you are excellent friends as it is. Fannie is Mr. and Mrs. Hughes’ eldest daughter, and she is too young to think of anything of the sort at present.”

She delicately refrained from alluding to the very shadowy nature of his own prospects, a medical student, with as yet no income of his own, being scarcely in her opinion, in a suitable position to propose to become engaged to such a girl.

“And I suppose you think undue haste would smash it all to smithereens,” muttered Jack.

“Exactly. Don’t you know, ‘He that believeth shall not make haste,’ and ‘The world comes round to him who waits,’—and ‘A good thing is worth waiting for.’”

"I know, I know," said Jack, cropping the grass restlessly with one hand, "but it is so hard to wait."

"Some people have to wait almost all their lives," said Kate very softly.

"Oh, yes, I know. You need not hurl all the wisdom in the world at me, on this particularly hot, tiring day," said Jack pettishly, "I want sympathy, not advice."

"You want your wine more than either!" exclaimed Kate, going towards the inn to get it.

"That's just like Kate. Is not she frightfully matter-of-fact?" grumbled Jack to Dr. Daker, who came up the moment after, and then finding he had not heard what she had said, he repeated his and her last words.

"My dear boy," said the Doctor quite paternally, "your nerves must be irritable indeed, if you have begun to quarrel with your excellent cousin."

"Don't be cross," said Jack, "I surrender. But it's all very well for you, Daker, who have everything you want, to preach to a poor fellow, who only wants one thing, and can't get that."

Dr. Daker was annoyed that he had not known sooner that Kate was Theodore's daughter, and he was much perturbed at what he had said in her presence. He no longer wondered that she had been so angry and indignant; but he comforted himself by the reflection that he would write to her to apologise and explain.

Unfortunately, however, he was not at letter-writing, which was not by no means a specialty. He was a scientific erudition, and his chief achievement was a model of precision which Kate read with interest and which was little better than a list of all. For it showed the cause of her distress and she thought that a few words would be sufficient to make her understand. He concluded that it was not worth the icy discomfort of the winter than the more comfortable of the summer. He was glad that she had been so kind to the last, and that he had been so kind.

"Most people only want one thing at once," replied Dr. Daker coolly. "And your premises as to me are not correct. But we will waive that point. What is the thing you want and cannot get."

"Ah, that is a secret," said Jack, turning to receive his glass of port from Kate.

"Does Miss Montague know it?" queried the Doctor, as he shook hands with her.

"Of course she does," said Jack. "And now, Kate, won't you tell us what your letter was about?"

"Is he not an over-indulged patient?" said Kate, glancing at Dr. Daker. "Well, if I must tell you, Mrs. Hughes sends a message to the effect that you are to accompany me to Taliesin Hall, as soon as you are well enough to go if—"

"Hurrah!" cried Jack throwing his cap up in the air, "I shall be well enough directly, you'll see."

"*'If,'* continued Kate, reading from the letter which she had now produced, "*'Dr. Daker and your medical attendant can say there will be no danger from infection.'*"

That is why I did not tell you before, I wished to consult the Doctor first."

Jack drew a long breath and looked beseechingly at Dr. Daker, who shook his head.

"I had just been thinking," he said, "that I must bid you both go somewhere for a short time, to be in quarantine as it were, before you join your friends."

"I never thought of that," said Kate. "Will it be necessary for me to go too?"

"It would be safer," said the Doctor. "I would take you to my place, Jack," he added, "only there is Mary, who is delicate and might take the fever from you. She always does take things. It's a bad habit of hers."

"*Ergo* her falling in love," suggested Jack.

The Doctor groaned and shook his head dismally.

"What shall we do?" asked Kate. "No one will like to receive us just now."

"I have been trying to make arrangements for you, Miss Montague," said Dr. Daker, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for him to study her welfare. "Mrs. Dr. Griffiths will be glad to have you."

for a week or two with her ; she is staying at Aberystwith with an old lady who is as hospitable and kind as she is herself."

" But Mrs. Griffiths is delicate, too," said Kate.

" Ah, but she declares she never takes anything of that sort. You see what it is to have a well-regulated mind."

" Does Dr. Griffiths consent to the arrangement ? "

" Certainly, his wife won him and her own way together, and the two have been inseparable ever since."

" What a well-regulated mind *he* must have," said Kate, smiling.

" But what shall I do ? " asked Jack rather wistfully. " I don't suppose those two right-minded ladies will have me, too."

" Oh, I'll take care of you, boy," said the Doctor. " Ah, you have Lewis Moris's poetry here," he added, taking up a volume from the little table.

" Yes," said Jack, in a rather lamentable voice, " Kate was trying to induce me to share her appreciation of it. But I don't care for

poetry any more than you do." It had been generally understood among the Hughes that Dr. Daker disliked poetry, because he used to look so intensely bored when Frank was discussing it with Kate.

"And I love it so," said Kate.

Dr. Daker gave her a quick glance.

"Listen, Jack, forget that this is poetry; it is something else as well," he said, hastily turning the pages. "With your permission, Miss Montague."

Kate bowed.

Then the Doctor, who had seated himself on the rug beside Jack, read in his deep voice—

Work on, live on.

And yet there is a higher work than yours.
To have looked upon the face of the unknown
And Perfect Beauty. To have heard the voice
Of Godhead in the winds and in the seas,
To have known Him in the circling of the suns,
And in the changeful fates and lives of men,
To be fulfilled of Godhead as a cup
Filled with a precious essence, till the hand,
On marble or on canvas falling, *leaves*
Celestial traces, or from reed or string
Draws out *faint echoes of the voice Divine*
That bring God nearer to a faithless world.
Or higher still and fairer and more blest,

To be His seer, His prophet ; to be the voice
Of the Ineffable Word ; to be the glass
Of the Ineffable Light, *and bring them down
To bless the earth, set in a shrine of song.*
For Knowledge is a barren tree and bare
Bereft of God, and Duty but a word,
And Strength, but Tyranny, and Love Desire,
And Purity a folly, and *the soul*
Which brings down God to man, the Light to the world,
He is the Maker, and is blest, is blest !"

Dr. Daker sprang up, and laying the book down, paced up and down, as his manner was when he felt anything very deeply. Suddenly he stood before Kate, looking inquiringly at her.

Her work had fallen on the ground. Her face was flushed and her eyes sparkled. But she did not speak.

Jack gave a long, low whistle.

"It's all very fine," he said, "but I think I could have understood it better in prose."

"It is like the four Gospels," said Dr. Daker, speaking more to Kate than her cousin, "all sufficient in itself *if only sufficiently studied.*"

"Well, I'll go in," said Jack ; "I have had about as much poetry as I can do with to-day," and he left them in his languid, invalidish way.

Dr. Daker turned gently to Kate.

"Was it sufficiently plain to *you*?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, "I am *quite sure* about it now."

"Sure about what?"

"I scarcely think I can tell you exactly what I mean, but I will try."

"Please do."

"Those words," she said, "so beautiful, so true and noble must thrill with meaning to you, who can spend your life, your strength in helping to bring down 'Light to the World.' Ah! what it must be to have a master-mind, to know the highest and most glorious of truths and bring them down to the lesser comprehension of the many, the ignorant, toiling, suffering masses, for everyone of whom He died. I have often thought what I could do if I had only great strength and power. As it is, and being as I am a woman with far more heart than head, I see more clearly every day—especially since I have been nursing poor Jack—that for women and particularly for one like myself,

who has no real home-claims upon her, the call is very plain to interpret at far as possible, not so much the mind of Christ (we leave that to you men) as His great Heart of Love, to labour as He did to reduce the pain and griefs of 'suffering, sad humanity.' A life of comparative ease would never satisfy me now." And, even as she uttered the words, Kate felt as if she had received a direct commission from on high to devote her life to the work of which she spoke.

"What do you think of doing?" asked the Doctor, his deep voice full of earnestness.

"At first I thought of becoming a medical-missionary, women are so much wanted for that in China. But now I think it would be better if I take simpler work near home, by entering some hospital and trying, after the usual training, if I can follow humbly in the steps of Sister Dora and other noble workers in that line."

Dr. Daker rose abruptly and began pacing up and down. Then he came back to Kate and stood a moment by her side, without speaking.

"Kate," he said at last, and there was a world of meaning in his voice.

"This for you, sir," cried a young man, alighting from his horse just behind them, and handing a telegram to the Doctor.

Considerably startled, for he had not heard the horse's hoofs on the soft grass over which it had come from the inn, and disconcerted at being interrupted just then, Dr. Daker bade the youth wait for an answer, and opening the paper, hastily read the few lines it contained. When he looked up again his face was very white.

"There is no answer required," he said to the messenger. "What is your charge?" and his voice sounded strangely broken.

Kate went quietly for a glass of water. When she returned Dr. Daker was alone.

"I hope there is nothing the matter with Mary?" she asked anxiously, as he placed the empty glass upon the table.

"Thank you, no. The worst has not happened. No one is ill or dying—but I must leave you at once." And he rose to go.

"Surely not at this moment. You will

have tea with us first. You will say good-bye to Jack," pleaded Kate.

"I must," he said with a melancholy smile. "I will write and tell Jack what to do. You will be hearing from Mrs. Dr. Griffiths. Good-bye."

Shaking hands hurriedly, he turned and went away.

Kate stood under the hawthorn tree, looking after his receding figure, as if she were almost stunned, and with a face nearly as white as his. He had left her without saying what he thought of the idea she had been cherishing and thinking so much about of late. She had been strangely stirred to tell him all her heart, and he had gone without one word of help or sympathy. Yet he had been deeply touched by what she had said; their souls had drawn very near together for one brief moment. Something terrible must indeed have occurred. He had evidently received a blow of some sort.

She had received one too, for he had gone—without a word.

Then a little robin came and sang to her a

brave and cheery song, and the sun came from behind a cloud and smiled upon her, and she recollected he had said the one word "Kate," and that too as she had never heard it said before.

CHAPTER XV.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me ;
I have not flatter'd its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee,
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles, nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo ; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such ; I stood
Among them, but not of them.

BYRON.

“ A RUINED man, a ruined man ! ” muttered Dr. Daker disconsolately, as he paced up and down his large dining-room one sultry evening in July.

The room looked bare and desolate ; every picture, ornament and most of the more portable furniture had been removed and were undergoing various cleansing and polishing operations in the back regions of the house ; from which quarter no little noise and bustle were consequently proceeding and jarring on the Doctor's irritated nerves.

He looked fully a couple of years instead of months older than when he parted with

Kate so abruptly under the hawthorn tree at Cwm-Careg. His hair was tinged with white and more than one line, indicative of anxiety and care had crept out about the corners of his firm mouth and clear grey eyes.

Seeing him now for the first time, a stranger would think at once that he was one who had known trouble, but had also come nobly through the fray. And if his face appeared older, it had gained a softer and more sweet expression. Kate would never have spoken so bitterly to him, as she had sometimes been tempted to do in the past, if he had always looked like that; no good woman could ever have said anything but gentle, almost tender words to such a man as he was evidently now.

This, however, was a weak moment, or rather an hour of some weakness with Dr. Daker, for he was on the eve of what he knew would be no small trial.

The telegram which had reached him that sunny day at Cwm-Careg was from his lawyer to announce the unwelcome news of the failure of the Bank, wherein all his

capital was invested. And, as he had held some shares in the Bank, besides the loss of his available money, he had to sell his dear old home to meet the calls on the shareholders, which were made for the purpose of indemnifying the depositors at the Bank.

Thereupon, he had been very anxious about Mary. Fortunately, her money, invested in house property at Rowston, was safe, but he could no longer provide a home for her. And though she besought him to accept a share of her income, he would not do so. The idea of his being dependent upon anyone, especially upon his young sister, was most objectionable to him. So his first thoughts of taking her abroad were abandoned, because, for awhile at least, he would have no means of supporting himself. Then Frank had come forward urging that he and she should be married immediately. His uncle had promised that he would give him a pretty house at the Penybont side of Melynbrehedyn for a wedding present, and there really was, he declared, no reason for delay. And Mary, though very much distressed at seeming to

abandon her brother in his desolation, would not hear of any other plan. "Why should she be obliged to live with a chaperon in some poky little place," she asked, "when she and Frank would have such a nice income between them and would be so very happy together." Then all the Hughes had come forward and pleaded the same thing, and the Doctor had felt obliged, though very much against his will, to consent.

Mary and Frank had been married very quietly two days before from this old home which was now so dreary, and Dr. Daker was thinking regretfully of this among other things as he walked up and down.

"How little I thought when I was reading those lofty words to Kate at Cwm-Careg that the dread monster *ruin* was so near," he sighed, going to one of the windows, which were all wide open, and looking out regretfully at a fine elm standing near the end of the house. "And she, what must she have thought of my abrupt departure, without one word of explanation or of sympathy with what she had just been

telling me?" And he began to pace up and down again, thinking "I should like to have seen her again—once more—before leaving England—but why should I disturb her peace? If she cares for me, and somehow I think we should not have understood each other so thoroughly, as we always did latterly, unless she does care for me; years will perhaps pass before I can offer her a home. No, I know it is better not to disturb her, but let her dream her dream and become the noble worker she means to be. But a hospital nurse, the ceaseless toil, the wearying drudgery! It may sound beautiful enough in theory, when one talks about it or reads of those who have done it with self-sacrificing devotion. But I know what such a life is, and I cannot bear to think of her submitting to it. She is not very strong, and has a most sensitive, sympathetic nature upon which work of that sort would be always making most exhausting demands. Yet I have no power to prevent her acting as she likes."

The sound of rapidly approaching wheels broke the silence and turned the current of

his thoughts. "Someone coming here," he wondered; "I rather doubt it. I suppose 'rats always flee from a falling house.' And I have no right to complain, for I know I never cultivated the society about here. I am afraid I was very proud, and stood aloof from the common crowd, thinking 'My mind to me a kingdom is,' and now I am justly punished. Still, I never thought I had so few friends, or that those I had would prove so helpless. Stevens might have come over, I should have gone to him if he had been in such trouble. But now he is married, of course home interests are paramount with him, and I dare say his wife would declare a letter of condolence was all that was required. Then my middle-aged neighbours, about whom dear little Mary used to moan so pitifully, have, it is true, done their little best to console me. Having families of their own, they doubtless thought it sufficient to congratulate me on having none, and of having disposed of Mary so satisfactorily, ending with hinting the desirability of my putting my shoulder to the wheel and becoming a

practical man of business. But oh," and here the Doctor paused opposite the empty fire-place, while an expression of intense pain crossed his face, "that is not the way I would have acted towards them! Heigho, what is this—?"

For now a cab was passing the window and stopping at the door. The next moment the bell was violently rung, and immediately after Hugh Hughes' voice exclaimed impatiently, "Where is he, your master, I say?"

Dr. Daker hastened across the room, but before he could reach the door, it was flung violently open, and the little man rushed in, crying "Oh, Daker, Daker! Dear old Daker, what in the world is the matter? What have you been doing? Why did you not write to me and tell me all about it? I have only just heard. I have hurried half across England, for I had gone with my friend to his home, and they did not know where I was at Taliesin. I always was careless about writing. But to think that you should have been brought to this while I am so rich," and Hugh actually shed tears.

Dr. Daker wrung his hand. "Why *you* are my best friend, Hugh!" he said in accents of such astonished wonder as might have grieved anyone else.

But Hugh was so absorbed in what had brought him there, and in what he was going to do, that he disregarded every other point.

"Have you lost all, Daker?" he asked, looking and speaking as if he longed exceedingly for an answer in the affirmative.

"All," replied the Doctor mournfully.

"How was it?"

"The Bank smashed, and swallowed up the whole bag of tricks."

"But your property and house?"

"To be sold for my liabilities."

"Ah, then what are you going to do?"

"I am thinking of taking the post of surgeon on board some vessel bound for a long voyage, probably for Australia."

"Why should you go so far?" asked Hugh, trying to restrain himself from saying what he meant to do.

"The farther the better," said Dr. Daker dismally. "You would not have me seek an

assistantship at home, where I have so long been my own master. And I must do something immediately."

"But with your abilities you could command a much better position. The idea of an M.D. being an assistant. It is too absurd."

"But the other things require time or money neither of which I have to spare."

"But why need you go so far?"

Dr. Daker did not reply. He was walking restlessly up and down again, while Hugh sat very erect in his armchair, cross-examining him, and looking extremely important.

"Is there no one you care to leave in England?" asked Hugh again.

"My sister is married, you have heard about it I dare say. We had a very quiet wedding, only your three nieces for bridesmaids and James for the best man."

"I did not mean Mary," said Hugh impatiently. "Of course I know about her wedding, for there was the little matter of the house; but I am vexed that Frank did not explain to me about your losses when he

wrote to me about himself and Mary. That accounts for your allowing the marriage to take place so soon. But never mind that now, Daker," as he noticed the grieved expression which stole across the other's face, "I have no doubt they will be happy. Frank is certain to behave most beautifully as a married man—everyone will declare he is a model husband. What I want to know is whether there is not anyone in England whom you care about leaving for so long?"

"Why this persistency?" asked Dr. Daker, stopping short and showing a very perturbed countenance. "What right have you, Hugh, friend as you are, to question me thus?"

"All the right in the world," cried Hugh, running up to him and clinging to one of his hands with both of his smaller ones, "because I am going to give you half my money."

"Half your money, dear fellow, what do you mean?" exclaimed Dr. Daker.

"That is why I came. That is why I hurried here. That is what I have been

trying to keep back all this time, that you might not think I am acting impulsively and without due thought," cried Hugh, laughing, though tears were in his eyes. "You shall have no sale. You shall keep your house. I will pay all you are liable for."

"But my dear Hugh, I cannot, and what is more, I *will not* hear of such a thing," said Dr. Daker firmly,

"Oh now, Daker, see, it would be the greatest pleasure this life could afford me," said Hugh eagerly.

"I believe it would, and I am very grateful. But I should be wronging all your dear, kind relations if I took such a large slice of money out of the family, and I shall never, *never* consent to do anything of the sort."

Dr. Daker spoke so earnestly that Hugh was convinced he really meant what he said.

The kind-hearted little man sat down in the arm-chair again, looking quite crushed and miserable.

"It is very noble of you, very noble, and I

shall never forget it," said Dr. Daker soothingly.

Hugh did not reply. He was trying to think of a convincing argument. Suddenly his face brightened.

"Daker," he said quite timidly, "I used to fancy sometimes that you were not indifferent to Miss Montague. I know I have no right to ask the question. But would you mind telling me if you are?"

"Do you still hope to win her yourself?"

"Oh, no, no, I see now it would not do, it was not at all a likely thing," and he paused a moment. Dr. Daker never knew how he had learnt what caused his voice to be very tremulous as he went on; "I should like her to be happy though. Do you remember that talk we had when you were going geologising, the day I, James, and Frank went to Barmouth to join the ladies, who had gone there by the early train?"

"Yes."

"Then you will recollect I told you that Miss Montague should never want, which-

ever way things turned. I have just settled five hundred a year on her, but you must not say a word about my doing it. If she knew from whom it came she might not be so glad to have it. I sought out her old lawyer, in London, Mr. Jeffcourt, and made arrangements with him. He will send her the money half-yearly, and I have made him promise not to tell her more than that it was left to her by a friend."

"I am very, very glad," said Dr. Daker, shaking hands warmly. "Now I care little for myself. If fortune buffets me about the world ever so furiously, I can think she is provided for."

"Then you *do* love her," cried Hugh excitedly; "I am very glad; now I am sure you will yield, for

When a lady's in the case,
You know all other things give place."

"But Hugh, man, I don't think, at least I don't know, that is I am *not at all* sure that she cares for me."

"Doesn't she?" replied his friend indig-

nantly; "then she is not the woman I think her. Why, Daker, no one could help loving you! If you only knew what I think of you—"

"My dear Hugh, you always regard me through rose-coloured spectacles, or rather through the kindly radiance of your own good heart."

Hugh was delighted. Such praise from the Doctor was as rare and unexpected as it was welcome. He did not know how Tupper wrote that the praise of good men is an earnest of the praise of their Maker, but he felt that he must have been acting very rightly indeed to have won such approbation.

"Daker," he cried, happiness quickening his reasoning powers and lending animation to his thoughts, "do you think it right to leave Kate, supposing that she loves you, without giving her the chance of a voice in the matter? Is it fair after you have done all you could to, to make her like you?"

"I thought of going away and leaving her in peace," murmured the other.

"Peace! Why, Daker, how obtuse you

are ! How can you think it right to lock the stable door when the steed is stolen ? ”

“ Say *if*, not when,” corrected the Doctor gravely.

“ What nonsense ; I tell you she must love you. It was evident enough why she should refuse me. But what other reason could cause her to refuse Frank, and to seem to care less and less about him after you had appeared on the scene.”

“ Her not caring for him does not certify that she cares or will care for me,” and Dr. Daker shook his head despondently.

“ I wish you would ask her, Daker,” said Hugh ; “ you know ‘ faint heart never won fair lady.’ ”

Dr. Daker smiled.

“ Look here, Daker,” persisted Hugh, taking fresh hope ; “ suppose things are as I say, and if you will not have half my money, how much will you have for Miss Montague’s sake ? ”

The Doctor took two or three turns up and down the room ; then he replied, to Hugh’s inexpressible relief—

"I will tell you what I will do. I will accept the loan of a thousand pounds with which to buy my neighbour, Dr. Simpson's, practice. I know if he can sell it for about that sum he intends going south, on account of his children, who are delicate. I should be certain to do well as his successor, being known and not disliked by the people about here, and should be pretty sure to make six or seven hundred a year, out of which I could gradually repay you."

"Agreed, agreed," cried Hugh, shaking hands vigorously, "and you may be quite sure that I shall never press you for payment. You will be able to take your own time about it. I only wish you were not too proud to accept the money as a gift, Daker."

Dr. Daker smiled, and Hugh consoled himself by reflecting that if things were as he suspected he would not refuse to accept a wedding present, especially if it were for Kate as well.

CHAPTER XVI.

KATE.

For I began to see that to grow more like this Son of God, by ever so little steps—patient, loving, obedient—was joy, and conquest, and wealth and royalty; and that this was a kind of shaping that came not as a child's snow image by easy moulding of soft hands, but as with iron and gold, by fiery fusing and much hammering. Wherefore it was no wonder that so much of the world should be more like a forge than a hall of feasting.

“JOAN OF ARC.”

“PERHAPS, Kate, I have been rather too fond of going about. You know that people used to call me frivolous.”

It was Mrs. Dr. Griffiths who was speaking, and she was lying on a couch in the bay window of one of the houses in Marine Terrace, Aberystwith. She had been silent for some time, gazing out at the glorious sea, glittering in the summer sunshine, and her companion, Kate, had imagined she was asleep.

The latter, who was sitting more within the room, just out of sight of the sea view,

engaged with some rather complicated fine needlework, started at the sound of the low, regretful voice, and answered soothingly—

“It is natural for you, in your weak state, to imagine all sorts of things, and to be full of misgivings, though I am rather surprised that *you* should care about an accusation so obviously untruthful.”

Mrs. Griffiths, who appeared to be the mere wreck of her former self, smiled, though she began again immediately—

“But so much society of a certain class does tend to make one worldly minded. I can see many things more plainly since I have been ill. I went to too many parties, but I thought it right then, and I found I could help one or two—Frank Hughes for instance.”

“And myself,” said Kate. “Your influence, Mrs. Griffiths, did me so much good, at a time when I most needed help of that sort.”

“Ah, but Kate, it was easy to help you, for you were one of us, though you knew it not.”

Dr. Griffiths' entrance at that moment in-

interrupted the conversation, and, leaving him with his wife, Kate took advantage of the opportunity to walk out a little.

It had seemed as if she were to have a special private training for the vocation of sick nurse before carrying out her scheme of publicly entering upon it, or rather upon the preparation for it; for Mrs. Dr. Griffiths had fallen very ill of inflammation of the lungs while she and Jack were staying with her and her friend Mrs. Jones, and long after Jack had proceeded to Taliesin Hall—where Mrs. Hughes, having softened towards him during his illness, had invited him to stay for some months until he was strong enough to return to work—Kate found it impossible to leave this dear friend of hers. It was in vain for the Hughes' to write beseeching, coaxing letters to their Kate to return to them. It was in vain for Mary to write that she only needed her presence at her wedding to make her happiness complete. Kate was immovable in her resolve to stay where her presence was required by the sweet and gentle friend, who clung to her in her affliction as to one who was strong and able to help.

Dr. Griffiths, not being able to remain long away from his practice at once, came over to see his wife as frequently as possible, and he would not hear of Kate's leaving her until now. For on the following day, Mrs. Griffiths being considerably better, it had been decided that Kate should at last leave her in the care of her kind hostess and return to her friends at Taliesin Hall.

So she thought of going for a parting stroll up Constitution Hill, that she might take her last look, for a time at least, of the glorious Bay of Cardigan.

Passing the gaily dressed groups of visitors thronging the beach, many of whom looked admiringly after her, Kate walked on quickly and began to ascend the hill. The day was very hot, and she felt unusually tired before she reached the top, and was obliged frequently to pause and rest upon the way. The strain of such long-continued nursing had considerably undermined her strength, and she was very glad when she had reached her destination and was able to sit down and look around.

It was evening by then. The hot July

sun was still some way above the horizon; its rays, penetrating through the heated air, possessed great power, and seemed to glow over the ocean with almost dazzling effect. Kate was obliged sometimes to rest her eyes by interposing her parasol between the shining water and their somewhat tired gaze.

At first her thoughts were rather melancholy. What numerous trials she had had during her not very long life, and now there had been this last one of the sudden cessation of Dr. Daker's and her friendship. She had hoped against hope that he would send her one word of explanation. Even a letter stiff and cold as the other she had had from him would have been better than nothing at all. She had heard from his sister and Fannie that he was going abroad, and, in connection with the former's hasty marriage, that he had sustained a considerable loss of fortune.

"But why should that prevent our being friends?" she questioned mentally. "Money is a small matter compared with many other things. I should like him to have allowed me the opportunity of sympathising with

him as a friend, and he might have helped me with a little advice as to how I should carry out my scheme."

For a nurse Kate was still determined to be, and she thought that Dr. Daker, as a medical man, would have known better than any of her other friends how to advise her about which hospital it would be better for her to enter, &c. There were many questions she would like to have asked him; it was very disappointing that he had given her no opportunity to do so.

As she sat there thinking all this, the cool sea breeze fanning her pleasantly the while, her gloom and despondency gradually gave place to a happier and more healthful feeling. Mrs. Griffiths' words, "You were one of us, though you knew it not," returned to her mind with a somewhat confused recollection of her fears, in the winter, on that very subject. She began to realise that she was saved *i.e.*, in a state of being saved after all; for there was nothing antagonistic, rather everything was in a beautiful state of unanimity between her soul and her

Divine Master. He, the Author of all good, loved holiness, meekness, moral beauty and excellence of each and every sort, and she—did she not love the same things with a great and exceeding love—more than she loved anything in the whole world? Yes—she knew she did, for there was nothing she would not do for *Him*. The life of Jesus, as shown in those four Gospels she now thought all sufficient, was full of marvellous beauty in her eyes, simply because there was depicted the expression of everything she had ever yearned to be and do. She could never be the same again as she had been in those old days of which she had been thinking, and yet, somehow, she was conscious of being just what she had ever been, only better, higher, nobler, and more completely satisfied, like a little child who, having been lost, has just found its mother, and received her promise never to leave it again, only with an adult's full-grown heart, and after having passed through well-nigh a quarter of a century without

The sweet, sweet peace His children know
When their feet are tarrying here below.

And, though she had passed through much trouble, she was all this without having undergone the struggles, tears, and tumult which she had once thought inseparable from an entrance into the higher Christian life, and which were, in her eyes, so repugnant to the feelings of a refined and educated gentlewoman.

Very tenderly had He led her to His feet, naturally, as in the growth of the physical frame, without clamour and noise of any kind, was she changing into the fulness of the stature of the children of God; but that she was there, and that she was so changing, the peace and rest of her whole being testified.

And, bowing her head upon her hands, she murmured there, upon that lonely summit, with its background of everlasting hills and the calm blue sea beneath,

“ ‘The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.’ ”

CHAPTER XVII.

KATE'S CHOICE.

He sees within her eyes
That which his nature needs to be complete—
The grace, the pureness, the diviner sweet,
Which to rude souls and strong our life denies ;
The vision of his nightly dream ;
More pure than e'er did seem
The Nymphs of old, by wood, or hill or stream.

* * * *

She views in him the strong
Deep note which adds the fulness to life's song ;
High aims and thoughts that glow.

“ODE OF LOVE.”

THE following morning Kate had a most strange and wondrous surprise, and here tautology must be forgiven, no other words being adequate to express the mingled awe, delight and bewilderment with which she read a most courteous epistle from Mr. Jeffcourt announcing that she would find enclosed the first instalment of an income of five hundred a year, the interest of money which had been entered in her name at —

Bank. The lawyer's letter also stated that the only stipulation attached to the gift of the money had been that the giver's name should be neither desired nor sought out. All Kate was to be told was that the money was from a sincere friend and well-wisher.

But naturally that was not all she wanted to know. At first she declared she could not accept so much money, but Dr. Griffiths, who had remained all night at Aberystwith, and his wife insisted that it would be Quixotic to refuse the money, which had evidently been given with the best intentions, and secretly, that she might not be burdened by a debt of gratitude to anyone she knew. These two friends of Kate's were very firm and most urgent with their advice in the matter, and she little suspected that they had actually received a communication from the giver himself, binding them to secrecy but beseeching them to use their influence to persuade her to accept the money.

Dr. and Mrs. Griffiths thought Hugh was acting rather strangely. But they knew he was generous and often did unusual things.

And they were very glad for Kate to be raised to a position of such comfort if not luxury.

"You must keep the money, dear Kate," said Mrs. Griffiths, as she bade her "good-bye." "Remember how much good you can do with it."

"I have been thinking," whispered Kate, "that perhaps I had better do so. For when I carry out my idea of nursing, I can dedicate it to the same cause, whether by keeping it in my own hands to use as I think best, or by paying it into the hospital funds as I receive it."

"You will then be as welcome to that favoured institution as the Roman Catholic maidens used to be, who fled to the convents with their wedding portions in the old and troublous times." And Mrs. Griffiths smiled.

"But I don't mean to go in a troublous time," said Kate, "and not from any maudlin discontent with this beautiful world. No, I am glad to go in the heyday of life when everything is pleasant and delightful. It is the very pleasantness and all that which helps to send me—"

"There is such a thing as *gratitude* in the world yet it seems," said Dr. Griffiths, entering and overhearing what she was saying. "But, Miss Montague, you will be late for the train if you linger."

It is unnecessary to say how glad everyone was to see Kate back again at Taliesin Hall. The children, Miss Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Hughes, to say nothing of Fannie and her Cousin Jack—now looking as sunburnt and well as if he had been making his long-contemplated tour in South Wales, instead of having had a fever at Cwm-Careg—seemed as if they could not make enough of her or tell her a sufficient number of times how glad they were to have her home again. It was all very pleasant and wonderful to Kate, who had no similar experience in all her past life with which to compare it. But one thing seemed even more strange, and perhaps was even more delightful to her mind, and that was that Dr. Daker, whose departure from England at about that date had so often been mentioned to her in the letters she had recently received, should turn up at Taliesin Hall that very same evening.

"Just as if he had come to meet our Kate," Jack said aside to Fannie.

"Perhaps he has," replied the girl, and then coloured very much, fearing she had betrayed a secret.

For Uncle Hugh was there, and he always was addicted to taking people into his confidence.

The little man was very happy, extremely important, and almost too officious Mrs. Hughes thought at times.

But then he was so anxious to arrange matters in such a way that Kate and his dear friend Daker might be left alone together. After the failure of innumerable plans, often so clumsily constructed, that it required immense tact and diplomacy on the part of everyone who possessed any of those admirable qualities to prevent their being ignominiously discovered and held up to universal ridicule, after Dr. Daker had become quite wrath with his zealous but indiscreet little friend, and after Kate had grown suspicious that Hugh was developing one of his marvellous ideas, though of what nature it was

she had no conception, he became quite desperate.

"Miss Montague," he said bluntly, colouring very much, as if somewhat conscience-stricken at the temerity of this last stroke, "have you seen the new books I brought home with me? they are in the library. You may go and choose one of them for yourself. Now do," he added in a lower tone, "please, just to show that you have a kind and friendly feeling towards me."

As he put it in that way Kate had no alternative but to go.

Only it was too unconscionable of the little man to say immediately she had left the room.

"*Now*, Daker—I mean, Daker, I know there are some books you would like too, indeed there are some I bought on purpose for you. If you will go now and choose which you would most like?"

"Thank you," replied Dr. Daker coldly, but colouring as he spoke, "another time."

"Come with me into brother's den then," said Hugh, dragging him out of the room, "I have something to say to you."

However, the others saw Hugh alone in the garden soon afterwards, gravely examining some of his plants, and the general impression remained that the Doctor had followed Kate.

When he entered the library—for he did enter it—Kate was standing near a box of new books by one of the windows, holding a small one in her hand, but looking not at it but out of the window at the glorious view beyond.

She was dressed in dark blue velvet, above which her hair looked very golden, bathed as it was in the rays of the setting sun.

She did not hear the Doctor enter, and he did not speak until he stood by her side, then he said very gently—

“Kate, may I see what book you have chosen?”

She gave it to him at once, that is she put it in his hands, as if it were the most natural and simple thing in the world that she should do as he asked.

As she turned, he might have seen if he were looking that her eyes were filled with

tears. But in his own blundering way, Tom Daker looked at nothing just then but the book he had taken from her.

"Why, it is the 'Epic of Hades!'" he said with a ring of gladness in his voice.

"Yes—you know I like it."

"Are you still thinking of going to be a nurse?" he asked abruptly.

"Certainly," replied Kate.

"But why?"

"I told you. Have you forgotten? For one with no home-claims" (and involuntarily her voice trembled a little) "upon her time, the call is evident; at least it is to me, to be set apart to work for those to whom I can do most good."

"You cannot do more good to anyone in the world than you can to me, my darling?" said Dr. Daker, more earnestly than Kate had ever heard anyone speak before. "My claims are greater than those of any other person." And then he did not say any more of all the words he had thought to utter, the arguments he had meant to use, the eloquence he had intended to employ. But he put both his

hands upon her shoulders and looked down at her with his earnest, kindly eyes, as if she, that tall and stately woman, were a little child and as such obliged—very gently and lovingly but still obliged—to do his bidding.

And Kate did not answer, for she could not, only she felt a great content and sense of safety and satisfaction, as if everything had come all right at last.

The sunset hues lingered about the two, resting on Kate's golden hair and happy face, and lighting up the Doctor's newly-developed threads of silver and the pride and joy his noble countenance expressed, as they stood long by the window.

THE END.

